BY THE TEAM AT SATURDAY AM

MAKING MANGA

THE SATURDAY AM WAY

STORYTELLING, WORLD-BUILDING, LAYOUTS

SATURDAY AM PRESENTS

MAKING MANGA THE SATURDAY AM WAY

Storytelling, World-Building, Layouts — With Two Manga Short Stories for You to Complete!

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INTRODUCTION

WHAT IS MANGA?

LETTER FROM THE PUBLISHER

Hi everyone,

My name is Frederick L. Jones. I'm the founder and publisher of Saturday AM, the world's most diverse manga brand. We have creators producing celebrated and popular manga from several countries outside of Japan, including those within the Americas, Africa, Asia, and Europe!

We created and designed the book you are now holding, *Making Manga: The Saturday AM Way*, to serve as an informative guide for anyone seeking to make their own diverse manga, from creating a concept to distributing your finished work. Our first how-to book, *Saturday AM Presents How to Draw Diverse Manga*, focuses on conceiving and drawing original characters.

What is diverse manga?

Our company specializes in manga by creators from around the world. Whereas the art form is Japanese, its impact has been felt and adopted in China, Korea, and France and, in many cases, sold alongside one another in major bookstores. Likewise, the category is supported heavily by Black and Brown consumers who rarely see themselves in the stories (while white characters may often appear, if not star, in prominent series like Fullmetal Alchemist). Manga fans of color also cosplay, voice act in anime, and create stunning art, but have yet to celebrate with their professional-grade manga stories that include more representation.

Saturday AM founder Frederick L. Jones posing for a photo in a Barnes & Noble in Durham, North Carolina

Saturday AM manga are sold in stores around the world, like in this Barnes & Noble store.

The Saturday AM brand was launched in 2013 and sought to normalize diverse heroes and creators. With artists from all over the world, we're hard to classify as manfra, manhwa, or even "Black" manga. We settled on "diverse manga" to celebrate our collective origins and cultural identities. Our books are now sold in stores globally (over 40 countries!) in the manga section with some of the biggest hits in non-Japanese-created content, including Apple Black by Nigerian Whyt Manga and Clock Striker, shonen manga's first Black female lead hero (with art by Nigerien Issaka Galadima).

Why does *Making Manga: The Saturday AM Way* exist?

One of the common refrains we hear from up-and-coming artists is that

they don't believe they can make manga. The reasons vary, but one excuse is that the manga industry is "racist" or doesn't support characters of non-Asian or non-white backgrounds. This theory is ridiculous and offensive, as I have personally been to Japan, have many Japanese friends and colleagues, and have been treated with nothing but the most unbelievable kindness and respect.

Yes, there *is* some prejudice in the anime and manga fandoms. Sadly, Black cosplayers and voice actors often receive insults and harassment for simply excelling in their craft, while white counterparts receive positive affirmation despite the fact that the characters they portray are of Asian origin.

But this is *not* why fewer Black and Brown heroes exist in manga stories; instead, we believe it's because of a lack of representation and, thus, imagination. In other words, it's hard to accept that it can exist if you don't see it. Even Black artists have felt uneasy about creating Black manga character designs because they feel it would seem "too forced" to see a main character like themselves.

Again, since it's rarely been done, then it may seem impossible to imagine.

Like most popular industries, from sports to movies and even technology, the anime and manga industries can be difficult for outsiders to enter, much less thrive in, but it's important to understand that *all industries* favor strong, unique voices. Saturday AM has been successful with our manga despite telling stories largely from outside of Japan and with a focus on cultural ideas that are different from most Asian countries.

We are proof that it can be done!

Therefore, we created our *How to Draw Diverse Manga* book to provide better reference material to support artists from *everywhere* (including Japan) by showcasing actual artists and professionals from within these communities! Saturday AM's mission has inspired young artists to imagine possibilities where people of all stripes can be the heroes of stories.

So, now that we have that out of the way—let's talk about *this guide* that you hold in your hands right now.

Making Manga: The Saturday AM Way is our first publication on creating your manga professionally for public consumption. While it's *not* a direct sequel to our how-to-draw book, it picks up on many

threads regarding constructing diverse characters, which you could use to populate your stories.

We should focus on a few other things that this book . . . is *not*.

Some print copies of Saturday AM books

For example, this is *not* a book about how to create traditional manga written for a Western audience, nor does it offer theories you may have read on social media. The handpicked artists and professionals we interviewed for this book are recognized globally for making, producing, and reviewing manga-style comics, and some actually have published manga on store shelves worldwide.

Likewise, this is *not* a Japanese "making manga" guide that you may have purchased from Japan or in your own country with translated text. Why? The industry you're familiar with in your country is most likely significantly different from theirs.

For example, while total manga sales in the US are in the millions of units, in Japan, the sales of just the *top* ten series are in the tens of millions, annually!

Furthermore, as manga is traditionally sold first in big phone book–sized *weekly* magazines (called *zasshi*) and then collected into small quarterly books (called *tankōbons*), there will most likely be a different distribution method for your work in your region. Large anthology magazines are less successful globally, while digital platforms have become a more efficient means of releasing your work quickly worldwide.

Lastly, right to left is a standard presentation of Japanese manga, but

there are other ways to envision manga. It's unlikely that your country has *any* magazines read right to the left besides manga, so if you're *not* used to producing content in that orientation, we do not believe you should feel obligated to.

This *Making Manga* book touches on the ingredients Saturday AM has used that can aid you in producing exciting and viable manga, including writing, drawing, page layouts, lettering, *and* distribution. It offers many tips that will help you refine your creative skills and also develop and distribute your own diverse manga.

We are *incredibly excited* to offer our blueprint for making diverse manga. We can't wait to see what you come up with.

Good luck!

Frederick L. Jones
Publisher, Saturday AM

Odunze Oguguo (Apple Black author Whyt Manga) signing his manga for influencer/cosplayer @krystalshanellee during a Free Comic Book Day signing at Cosmic Comics & Cards in Grand Prairie, Texas

***Gag Manga*!**

We hope you'll enjoy our exclusive original gag manga episodes (inspired by the classic Sunday comics in newspapers) that will help explain key parts of our manga-making process. Every chapter begins with one, so please enjoy!

WHAT IS MANGA THE SATURDAY AM WAY?

The term “manga” in today’s society is often used to differentiate Japanese comics from every other form of comics. In the same way, “anime” is used to differentiate between Japanese animation and animation created anywhere else. “Manga” just means comics in Japanese, as does “manhwa” in Korean. While technically they are all the same thing, differences do lie in the way sequential art is predominantly handled in these countries.

Japanese comics tend to save money by working in greyscale primarily. Aside from cultural differences and subject matter, Japanese comics are also more cinematic in panel pacing, with engaging installments released very often (depending on the series), and have a lot of installment chapters serialized in a magazine before being collected into graphic novels. The biggest properties also give more power to the creators in most cases. The manga artists have grueling work schedules and dedicate most of their lives to their craft.

Western or American comics tend to value quality and work in color, and artists, writers, letterers, and more generally work on projects they don’t necessarily own. Magazines serializing content are far less common, and installments, due to all the work that goes into them, are far less frequent in release schedules. American comics are much faster paced, and while there are exceptions, especially outside the

mainstream, it's common to get a lot of stories in only a few pages. The process of production differs. In most cases, there are multiple people assigned to a project, including a writer, artist, colorist, and others, unlike most Japanese comics, where the creator is usually the artist and writer spearheading their work, sometimes with the help of an editor.

Korean comics have things in common with both American and Japanese comics, but in recent times, they have tended to start digitally in a scroll-reading format on the internet. If a series becomes popular enough, the scroll-format comics may be collected into graphic novels as well, just like American and Japanese comics. There will always be exceptions to this, but these are the predominant approaches that are common today.

Arodihs appears! Character designs from Apple Black are inspired by various mythical and cultural influences from Odunze Oguguo's Nigerian upbringing. Apple Black, Volume 4, *Odunze Oguguo*

Clock Striker embodies the look and feel of traditional Japanese manga. Clock Striker, Volume 1, *Frederick L. Jones & Issaka Galadima*

This book draws from *all* of these realities to find the most effective way to tell a manga-style story. For example, weekly manga production for most global artists is unlikely due to cultural differences and the economic reality that manga and comic sales are less substantial in their respective countries.

As a result, minor sales or distribution may mean less time to gain an audience. Saturday AM focuses on *momentum* with our stories, where

characters, situations, and more are presented quickly without feeling rushed.

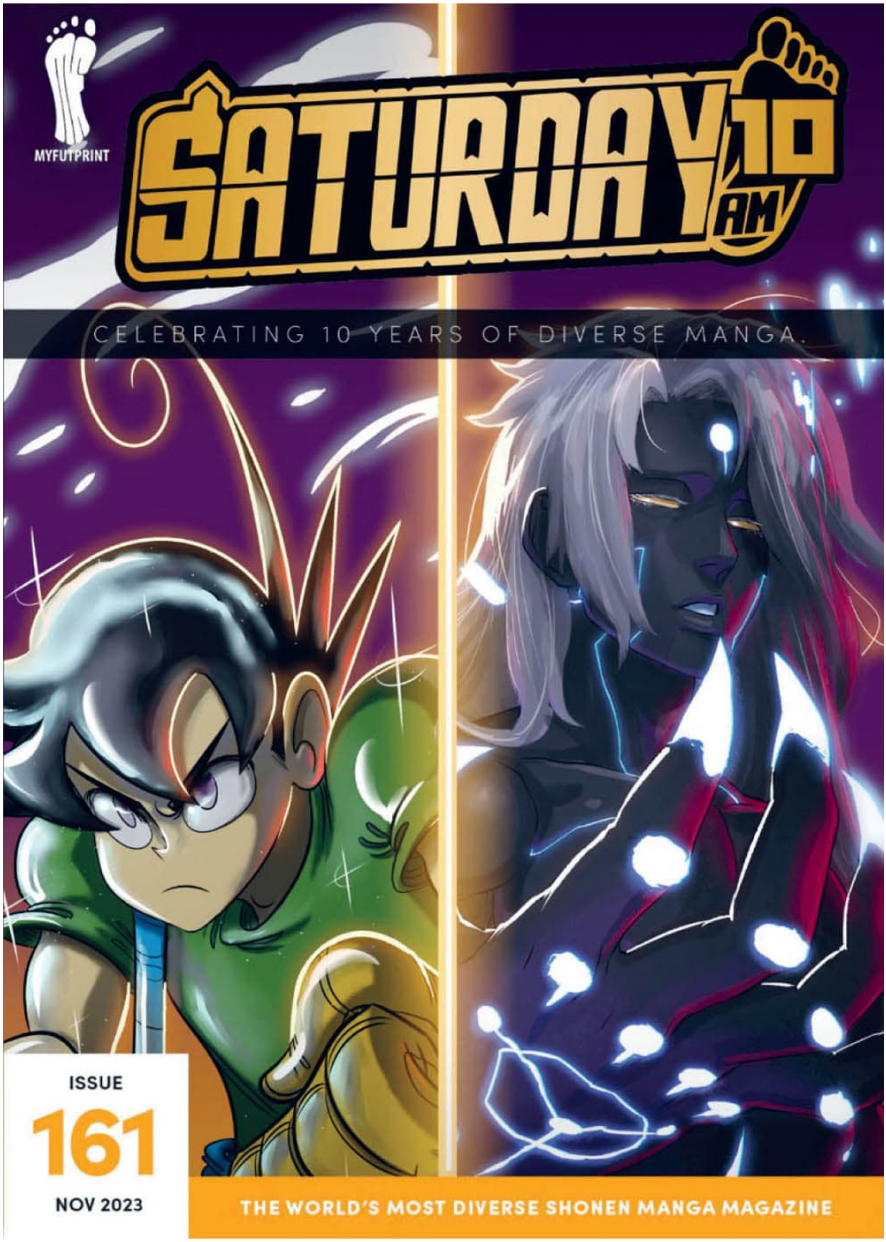
Another factor we explore is *digital distribution*, which may allow a creator to reach a potential global audience! This approach could strengthen an artist's work, confidence, and timing to tell their story while growing their fanbase.

This is what *Making Manga: The Saturday AM Way* should help you achieve.

AUTHENTICITY, NO MATTER WHAT

Japanese manga's authenticity stems from creators drawing upon their intimate knowledge of self, their surroundings, and their culture. Diverse manga echoes this ethos, transcending borders to include creators worldwide who infuse their authentic selves into their work. While drawing inspiration from the visual and cinematic brilliance of Japanese manga, the process starts with writing what you know. It involves expanding your understanding through research when needed, ensuring your manga communicates something compelling and noteworthy.

Issue 153 + 154 of Saturday AM - Cover by Oscar Fong, Jeyodin, and Issaka Galadima



Issue 161 of Saturday AM - Cover by Jeyodin and Whyt Manga

DIVERSITY ALSO MATTERS

Embracing diversity fosters positive growth, signifying variety with the aim of progress. Within Saturday AM, this entails ensuring our characters, worlds, creators, and stories reflect the rich tapestry of the world, yielding interesting and fresh stories that are paramount. Exploring underrepresented facets opens avenues for growth, discovery, and improvement. Lack of diversity hinders our goal of collective progress, limiting opportunities to learn and making life easier for everyone. Diversity, spanning ethnicity, religion, sexual orientation, thought, background, and more, encompasses everything possible to enhance lives.

Example page from Orisha, Volume 1, *Huzayfa Umar*

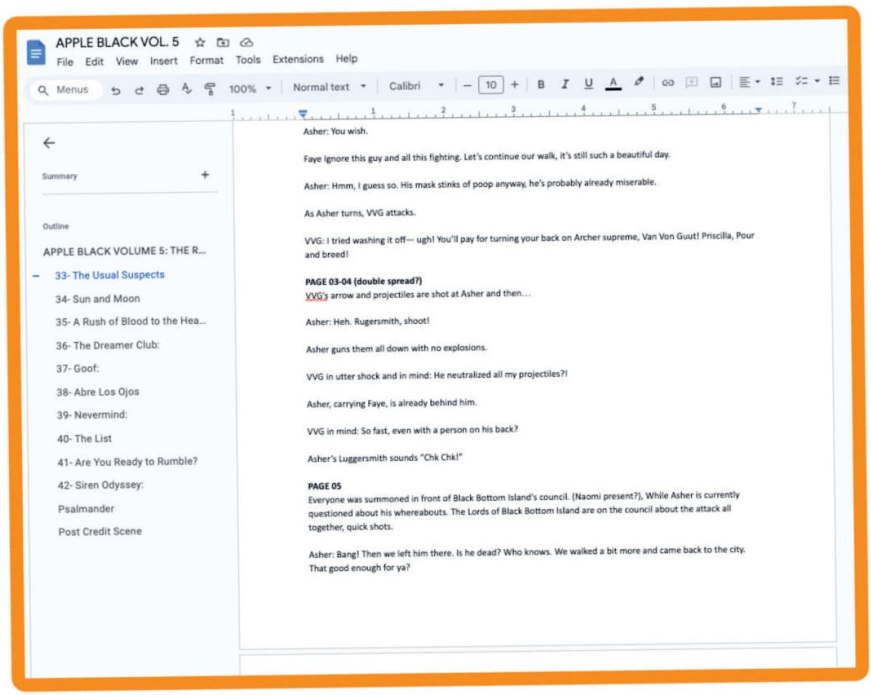
YOUR MANGA-MAKING PROCESS

Unlocking your creative process involves exploring various methods to discover what uniquely suits you. One approach is to commence with your story idea, crafting a compelling plot and synopsis, and translating them into a script. Simultaneously, delve into developing concept art, character designs, and series world sketches inspired by your evolving descriptions. Progress to crafting captivating thumbnails and storyboards, essentially blueprints guiding the layout of your pages based on the script. From these storyboards, bring your manga pages to life before finally sharing your creation with the world. Throughout this journey, we will intricately unravel the intricacies of the process, the Saturday AM way!

1. SCRIPTING

This process can be light (a.k.a. the Marvel Method) where you explain the plot and leave many details to the artists, or a full script in which you detail every part of the story from camera angles to the characters' dialogue.

A script can be created with any word processing program.


APPLE BLACK VOL. 5
File Edit View Insert Format Tools Extensions Help
Menus
100%
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Summary
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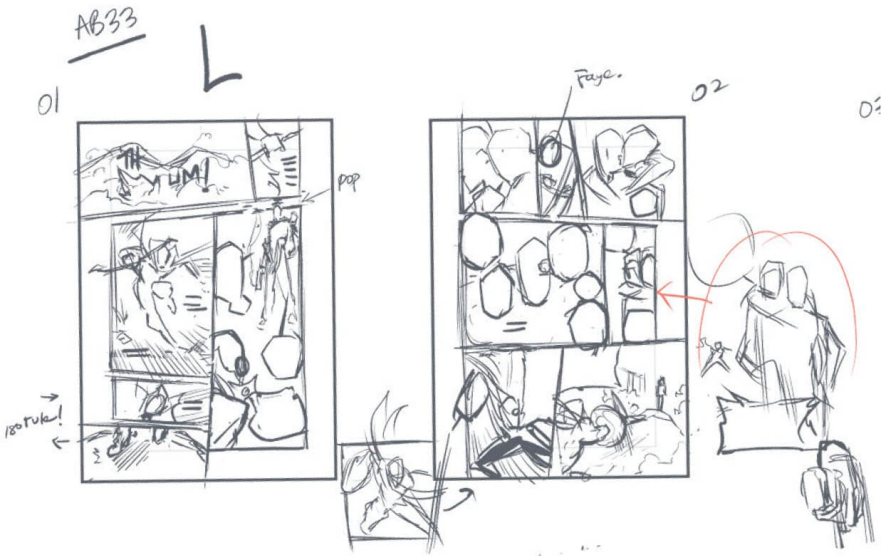
APPLE BLACK VOLUME 5: THE R...
33- The Usual Suspects
34- Sun and Moon
35- A Rush of Blood to the Hea...
36- The Dreamer Club:
37- Goof:
38- Abre Los Ojos
39- Nevermind:
40- The List
41- Are You Ready to Rumble?
42- Siren Odyssey:
Psalmander
Post Credit Scene
Asher: You wish.
Faye ignore this guy and all this fighting. Let's continue our walk, it's still such a beautiful day.
Asher: Hmm, I guess so. His mask stinks of poop anyway, he's probably already miserable.
As Asher turns, VVG attacks.
VVG: I tried washing it off— ugh! You'll pay for turning your back on Archer supreme, Van Von Guut! Priscilla, Pour and breed!
PAGE 03-04 (double spread?)
VVG's arrow and projectiles are shot at Asher and then...
Asher: Heh. Rugersmith, shoot!
Asher guns them all down with no explosions.
VVG in utter shock and in mind: He neutralized all my projectiles?!
Asher, carrying Faye, is already behind him.
VVG in mind: So fast, even with a person on his back?
Asher's Luggersmith sounds "Chk Chk!"
PAGE 05
Everyone was summoned in front of Black Bottom Island's council. (Naomi present?), While Asher is currently questioned about his whereabouts. The Lords of Black Bottom Island are on the council about the attack all together, quick shots.
Asher: Bang! Then we left him there. Is he dead? Who knows. We walked a bit more and came back to the city. That good enough for ya?

2. THUMBNAILS

Most artists will thumbnail the story for a chance to understand how it might look visually and to get writers', editors', and assistants' sign-off or suggestions before committing to drawing out the page.

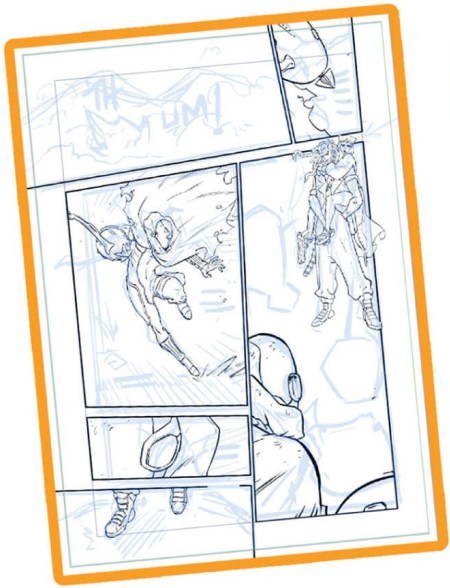
This process is essential for any team-based project.



3. INKS/LINE ART

When the thumbnails are approved or requested changes have been agreed to, the artist and their team create a more detailed look for the story called line art. Typically, this will *again* have an approval phase to ensure that the actual art captures the desired goals of the writer and team.

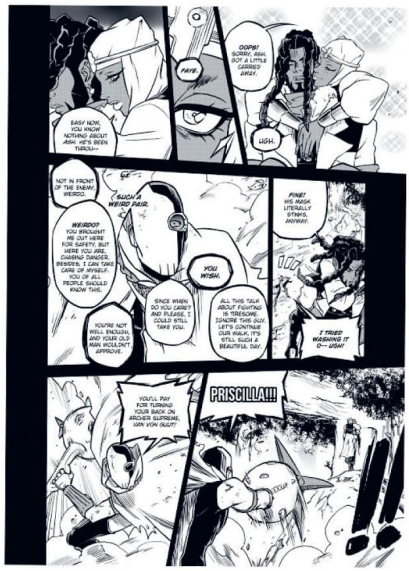
After approvals, the art will then be inked to give a final look for the pages.



4. FINISHING/TONING

This process is where any final layers of art are added and detail or toning is added to the existing art to ensure all finished illustrations have depth.

The lettering will also happen at this phase, as well as coloring (should your manga require such).


EASY NOW, YOU KNOW NOTHING ABOUT ASH. HE'S BEEN THROU—
FAYE.
OOPS! SORRY, ASH, GOT A LITTLE CARRIED AWAY.
UGH.
NOT IN FRONT OF THE ENEMY, WEIRDO.
WEIRDO?? YOU BROUGHT ME OUT HERE FOR SAFETY, BUT HERE YOU ARE, CHARGING, WHERE, WARREN, I CAN TAKE CARE OF MYSELF. YOU OF ALL PEOPLE SHOULD KNOW THIS.
SUCH A WEIRD FAIR.
YOU MYSELF.
FINE! HIS MASK LITERALLY STINKS, ANYWAY.
I TRIED WASHING IT O— UGH!
YOU'RE NOT WELL ENOUGH, AND YOUR OLD MAN WOULDN'T APPROVE.
SINCE WHEN DO YOU CARE? AND PLEASE, I COULD STILL TAKE YOU.
ALL THIS TALK ABOUT FIGHTING IS TIRESOME. IGNORE THIS GUY. LET'S CONTINUE OUR WALK. IT'S STILL SUCH A BEAUTIFUL DAY.
YOU'LL PAY FOR TURNING YOUR BACK ON ARCHER SUPREME, IAN VON GUST!
PRISCILLA!!!

BO
OM!
SO, SAD A HOW THEY MUST FEEL
THE SUPREME IAN VON GUST!
I WANTED MY A MACHINGAN FROM ORIGINS!
WHAT'S IT TO A DEAD MAN?
YOU SHOULD'VE CUT YOUR LOSS AND LEFT.
BUT NO.
BOOK 'EM. NOW, YOU'RE TARGET PRACTICE.
HE WASN'T INSIDE.
NOT ONCE!
SHUT UP! YOU KNOW NOTHING ABOUT LOSS!
WHO ARE YOU TWO?!

5. FINISHED BOOK

The final steps are ensuring that the book is ready for print and translation. The lettering will be done in layers via Adobe InDesign so that your manga can be translated into foreign languages, and the gutter for the book will be reviewed to guide the fixing of any art mistakes or layout issues (especially if the art or text will be cut off due to poor bleed management).

SATURDAY AM
PRESENTS
ANGLE BLACK
5
STORY AND ART BY ODUNZE OGUGUO

USE
THE QR CODE FOR SPECIAL INSIGHTS ON THE MAKING MANGA PROCESS.

MANGA OR MANFRA? GLOBAL MANGAKA WEIGH IN!

Go!Go!Golden Voice © Emash / Kippon Dreams

One of the most successful manga markets outside of Japan is not the US, but France. Creators like Tony Valente of Radiant and Remo Lemaire of Dreamland have not only achieved success as original manga-inspired works but have even achieved success in Japan with anime adaptations. Original French manga has been

dubbed "manfra" by some, just as OEL (Original English Language) was once used to describe American-made manga.

While some pundits think this is an appropriate way to describe these works, many fans, retailers, and the creators themselves view it as needlessly complex and somewhat dismissive. After all, many professional anime and manga producers in Japan simply refer to foreign works as manga or (insert country name) manga. Furthermore, some newer creators like you may feel conflicted about making your own manga.

Saturday AM has always believed that manga is manga, and the only thing that's different is the diverse countries of origin. If you're looking for some insights from other non-Japanese creators, the following interview contains excerpts from a conversation with several professional mangaka—Jovantore creator Daniel Eichinger of Germany; Go!Go!Golden Voice creator Emash of France; Horion creators Aienkei and Enaib of France; and Ripper creator Jeronimo Cejudo of France—about their experiences making manga in their respective countries.

What is your favorite definition of "mangaka"?

Daniel:
I personally see *Jovantore* as a manga because my drawing style is mainly inspired by Japanese comics—manga, in other words. Works like Battle Angel Alita, Blame!, or Blade of the Immortal had a big influence on me in my early years. But to be honest, *Jovantore* moves between worlds, so to speak, because it is not 100 percent comic, manga, graphic novel, or anything else. But it is Daniel Eichinger through and through.

Do you call your work "manfra" or some other name or just "manga"?

Aienkei & Enaibi:
Horion is a manga that follows the traditional Japanese style of storytelling and drawing. However, some authors who use a combination of styles prefer to use different terms to describe their work. We prefer to stick with the term "manga," as it is already a well-known term. Being a talented author is already challenging, so we won't burden ourselves with defining abstract concepts.

Jovantore © *2025 Daniel Eichinger / Egmont Verlagsgesellschaften*

Does it bother you when people call your work fake manga?

Emash:
Of course it does. Manga literally means “comics.” Calling it fake just because it isn’t Japanese might go too far, as I use the rules and techniques used in manga. Fortunately, it never really happened to me, but I had cases where people were about to buy my manga, thinking it was from Japan, but immediately retracted when they knew it was, in fact, from France. I don’t know what to think about that . . .

We know manga is popular around the world; what inspired you to create it in your country?

Jero:
Dreamland, another French manga, convinced me that I wanted to do it for a living when I was 15. But Dragon Ball, Naruto, and One Piece had a lot to do with it in the first place. But otherwise, everything inspires me, whether it’s manga, films, music, video games, or whatever.

Go!Go!Golden Voice © Emash / Kippon Dreams

Has your work been translated into other languages? If so, which languages?

Aienkei & Enaibi:
Horion is being officially distributed in four countries: France, Spain, Italy, and Portugal. Although our manga is partially available in English online, this version is unofficial. However, we are gradually expanding our reach, and the enthusiasm and interest from other countries reinforce our belief that Horion has the potential to be loved everywhere, which is our greatest wish. As Buzz Lightyear would say, “To infinity and beyond!”

Daniel:
Yes. Germany and Italy. Of course, I would be delighted if my works

were to appear in Japan at some point.

Have Japanese fans or companies become interested in your work?

Aienkei & Enaibi:
We have established some connections in Japan who appreciate our work. Thanks to one of them, we could submit our work for a competition organized by Shueisha, the publisher of the *Weekly Shōnen Jump* magazine in Japan. Horion was among the first five titles awarded, and we are grateful for the opportunity to showcase our work.

What's the name of your series and the plot?

Emash:
My series is Go!Go!Golden Voice, serialized since 2021 in the *Kippon Dream* magazine and then compiled into a volume. It's the story of Fusilli Gorgonzola, the son of a mafia boss. He's more interested in music and wants to start a career in this industry. Unfortunately for him, his father wants to make him his successor, so we'll see what choices Fusilli will make and whether or not he'll follow his predestined steps.

Aienkei & Enaibi:
Horion tells the story of a young boy who is determined to find his older brother, not realizing that he has already passed away. The plot takes the reader on a seemingly impossible journey, following the footsteps of a ghost. Along the way, diverse characters are encountered, each with unique stories contributing to the overarching narrative. The two main themes of the manga are adaptation and evolution.

Ripper © Jeronomo Cero / Ankama Editions

Horion © 2018 Aienkei et Enaibi / Éditions Glénat

Jero:
So my series is called Ripper, and the story is:

Following an unprecedented cataclysm, the air has become unbreathable, and hostile creatures have taken over the planet, forcing the last survivors to confine themselves to a makeshift tower.

Among them, volunteers are trained to find a new Eden. They are called the Ripper(s)!

On a reconnaissance mission, the Oak Squadron meets Junk, an optimistic young boy who seems unaffected by the state of the Earth . . .

Daniel:
My manga *Jovantore* is a dark fantasy graphic novel. At first glance, Rita is a completely normal young woman. But what no one can tell is that she is constantly plagued by a persistent ticking sound that seems to come from right inside her head. The doctors are also at a loss. But when Rita has already given up hope of a cure, she meets a mysterious old witch who gives her a watch of all things, and things get intense from there!

What's been the hardest part of making a non-Japanese manga?

Jero:
Whew! It's another complicated question. There's little difference between being Japanese, French, or American and making manga. We will tell a different story through different sensibilities and cultures.

But maybe not having an assistant can be very hard at the beginning. I'm lucky enough to have one now, and it helps a lot. For how long? I don't know!

The global reach is different, too. The platform Manga Plus helps a lot, and *Weekly Shōnen Jump* (and the other magazines) is known throughout the world and by all manga fans. That may be the hardest part.

Is your manga serialized like in Japanese manga magazines? If not, do you wish it was?

Emash:
In a certain way, yes! *Kippon Dream*, which is the name of my publisher, is also the name of a magazine. Every three months, a new issue is published with many other French manga artists and their series. This is something I was really looking for almost 10 years ago, and I'm glad I'm still working with them and publishing my manga in the magazine. I love how everything is organized, like who will do the cover next, what manga has things going on to make it on the magazine news, and all the meetings we have to prepare for the following issues/volumes. I'm also thrilled with how I'm being supervised, as an editor should do with their authors.

What is manga fandom like in your country?

Aienkei & Enaibi:
During the 1990s and early 2000s, it was a golden age for Japanese pop culture enthusiasts. Many amateur manga artists created their own comics and shared them in salons. However, today, there are more consumers of Japanese pop culture than amateur creators. Hayao Miyazaki, a famous Japanese animator, lamented that in the West, the public is content with solely consuming media and does not take the time to create their own. This perspective highlights the superficiality of modern society.

Horion © 2018 Aienkei et Enaibi / Éditions Glénat

What does success look like to you? Anime? Videogame? Toys?

Jero:
None of the above. Success is when your publisher tells you you can continue your series without worrying. After that, I wouldn't say no to a 2D fighting game and a card game!

You have existing fans in your country, but in which country were you surprised to learn you had new fans?

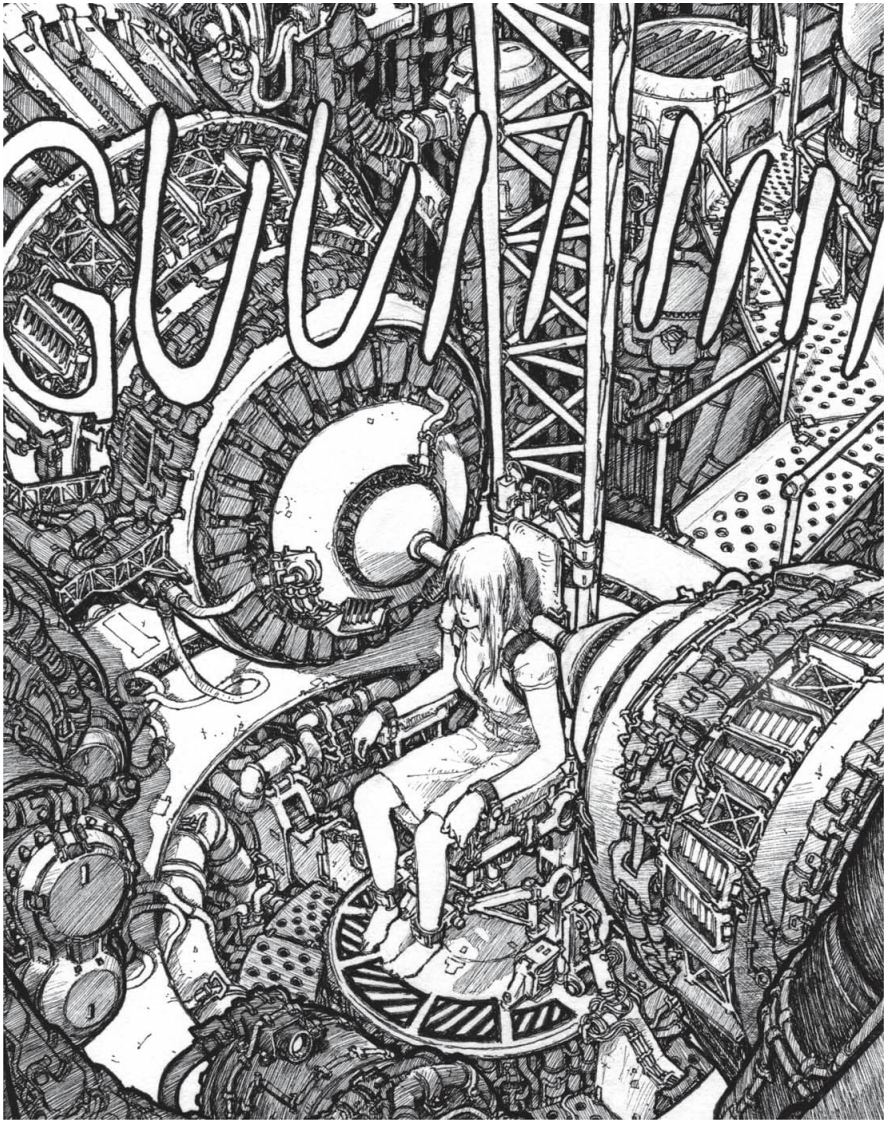
Jero:
There are a few fans in the US, and it's really cool! I hope for an English-language release shortly so more people can access Ripper.

If you had an anime (or a new anime adaptation), what would you want it to be? Movie? TV? Filler?

Emash:
All of them, hah! As I am quite slow, I already told myself that a movie adapting everything I did to this point (one volume) would be great! Or TV with filler episodes, showing or telling things that I want to draw but cannot because of lack of time. It's a big dream, but I can only dream for the moment.

Do you think adding diversity (more elements unique to your country and culture) to manga makes it more interesting and successful?

Jero:
I'm not seeking success, so I wouldn't know what to say. But it's truly the characters that bring life to your stories, making them captivating and interesting. The joy of creating characters, making them human, fragile, with more than just one side to them, is what drives me.



Jovantore © *2025 Daniel Eichinger / Egmont Verlagsgesellschaften*

USE THESE TWO QR CODES FOR SPECIAL INSIGHTS ON THE INTERNATIONAL MANGA ARTISTS!

PART 1: ISSAKA GALADIMA

In the next chapter we'll discuss how to craft a winning manga concept!

ALL RIGHT! THE MANGA CLUB TRYOUTS ARE HERE!
I'M SO READY TO GET MY WORK OUT THERE!
MANGA CLUB
-TRYOUTS!-
HI! I'M A WRITER AND I'D LIKE TO JOIN YOUR CLUB.
ALRIGHT, JUST FILL OUT THIS FORM.
WHOA...
I HAVEN'T DONE ANY OF THIS.
I JUST NEEDED AN ARTIST...
AIN'T HOW IT WORKS, MAN.
PASSION IS ONE THING, BUT IT'S BEST TO GET SOME EXPERIENCE ON SMALLER PROJECTS BEFORE TACKLING A BIG MANGA PROJECT. COME BACK WHEN YOU'VE DONE MORE!
I'M DOOMED...
HEY! EXCUSE ME!

HERE'S THE ART I SAID I WOULD BRING!
OH, YES. I REMEMBER YOUR FORM FROM EARLIER.
HMM...WELL, THERE'S POTENTIAL, BUT ALL YOUR ART IS JUST APPLE BLACK FANART. THEY'RE ALL DRAWN FROM THE SAME ANGLE AND YOU DON'T HAVE ANY BACKGROUNDS.
THIS ISN'T ADEQUATE AT ALL. COME BACK AT A DIFFERENT TIME.
M-MY DREAMS...!
HEY, MAN, I JUST GOT REJECTED TOO...
WE'RE BOTH NOT WHERE WE WANT TO BE...
SO MAYBE WE CAN TEAM UP!
WE'LL IMPROVE OUR SKILLS AS A WRITER/ ARTIST DUO!
WE'LL TAKE OVER THE MANGA CLUB, NO DOUBT!

CHAPTER
CRAFTING YOUR MANGA CONCEPT

BUILDING A BOX FOR YOUR STORY

In theory, this is a straightforward query:

What ideas excite you?

What genres thrill you?

What types of stories have you never seen before but have always wanted to?

Every beginning creator in every country and comic style has started their passion by looking at their favorite creators and emulating them. But with so many ideas, it can be hard to pick the right path. Backstory, character dynamics, and unique plot points are crucial to constructing a solid and compelling story. As an artist or a writer, you should want your manga to have a fresh perspective that may take inspiration from your favorite creations but is uniquely your vision. So, at Saturday AM, our process usually begins by putting all those ideas you are considering in a box.

Metaphorically speaking, of course.

Think of the process of developing a story as if you're shooting arrows. When you fire your ideas without a clear target, they go everywhere but where you may want them to! We have found that a great way to help focus your aim is to install walls or barriers to help you zero in on the best storytelling target.

I'M OPAL WANTMORE!
STUDENT BODY VICE PRESIDENT. I CAN GUIDE YOU TO THE GUILD.
SANO, WAS IT?
SAA-SANNO BENGO -OTE TAMASH -!!!?
THERE IT IS AGAIN! BODY IS FROZEN, THAT SAME BLOOD-RUSHING SORCERY?. WOMEN ARE STRONG IN IMPULSE.

Apple Black, Volume 1, *Odunze Oguguo*

BUILDING THE BOX'S WALLS

Since ideas can go anywhere . . . the box is the perfect metaphor. By erecting a ceiling, walls, and a floor, your concept begins to have a foundation that can be used to build upon more confidently.

Consider our helpful questions to help frame your box:

- Is your setting unique? If not, that wall limits your focus to the environment most important for the core story.
- Do you have a particular objective you want your character to pursue? Narrowing what the character wants to accomplish may allow for better characterization and pacing.
- Is there a particular type of story you've wanted to tell or think is compelling?

Let's do an exercise using that last bullet point:

I have always loved Batman!

Who hasn't?

There are few manga characters like Batman, but the character's primary motivation of revenge as a result of the trauma he experienced as a child is a proven universal concept. Now, a challenge to this character is that Batman can literally work in sci-fi, superhero, horror, and mystery, but the box will preclude us from doing them all, so our first wall is *plot*!

Let's begin!

BACKSTORY VS. PLOT

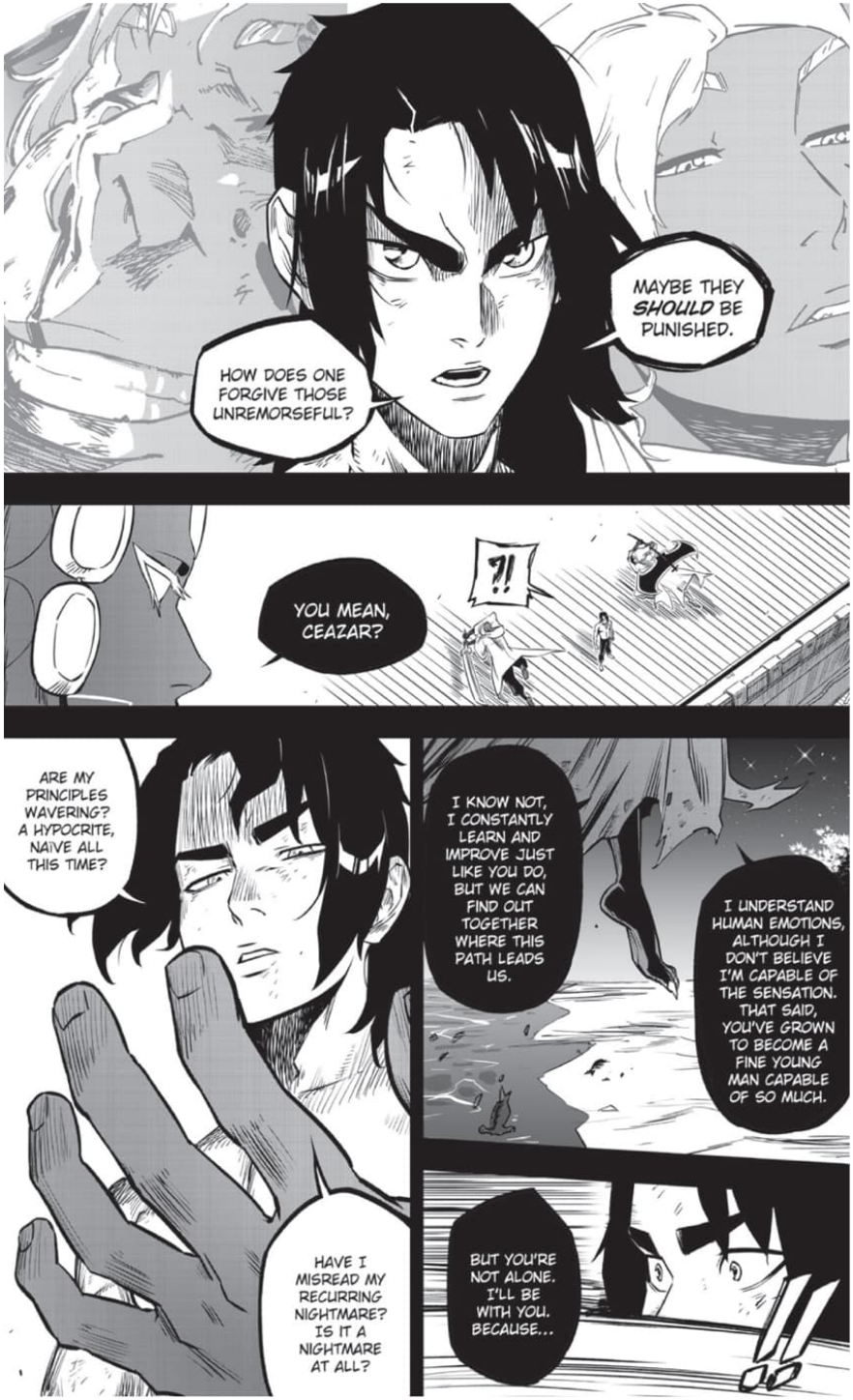
The first wall is the backstory versus plot dilemma.

World-building is essential to your concept and can be exceptionally fun to develop, but explaining the essence of your story can be overwhelming for the reader or potential fan if you have to explain too much about the history of the characters and the world itself. It's easy to have so many ideas that you get lost on the path of settling on one compelling one.

Your box should begin with finding the plot and focusing on your protagonist's goal, obstacles, and feelings toward both. Once you've nailed that, you should seek a similar streamlined approach to your secondary character and main antagonist.

For example, in our middle-grade manga Gunhild, the plot is a girl who wants to prevent Ragnarok (the end of everything). You don't need to know about Norse mythology to understand the title character's isolation and desire to become a God (seek power) to save her friends. Gunhild suffers from discrimination and often acts out (much like a knuckleheaded ninja in an orange jumpsuit).

Gunhild, Volume 1, *Fred Tornager*


HOW DOES ONE FORGIVE THOSE UNREMORSEFUL?
MAYBE THEY *SHOULD* BE PUNISHED.
YOU MEAN, CEAZAR?
?!
ARE MY PRINCIPLES WAVERING? A HYPOCRITE, NAÏVE ALL THIS TIME?
HAVE I MISREAD MY RECURRING NIGHTMARE? IS IT A NIGHTMARE AT ALL?
I KNOW NOT, I CONSTANTLY LEARN AND IMPROVE JUST LIKE YOU DO, BUT WE CAN FIND OUT TOGETHER WHERE THIS PATH LEADS US.
I UNDERSTAND HUMAN EMOTIONS, ALTHOUGH I DON'T BELIEVE I'M CAPABLE OF THE SENSATION. THAT SAID, YOU'VE GROWN TO BECOME A FINE YOUNG MAN CAPABLE OF SO MUCH.
BUT YOU'RE NOT ALONE. I'LL BE WITH YOU. BECAUSE...

Apple Black, Volume 4, *Odunze Oguguo*

Why?

Because unlike all of her friends and neighbors, she is a Jotun, while they are human.

What does that mean?

Jotuns are powerful beings (godlike or non-human beings) like trolls or giants, who mainly hail from Jotunheim.

Horror, action, or romance—whatever the genre of your story, the plot and characters are essential to making it work. Remember: Mythology can always be added later.

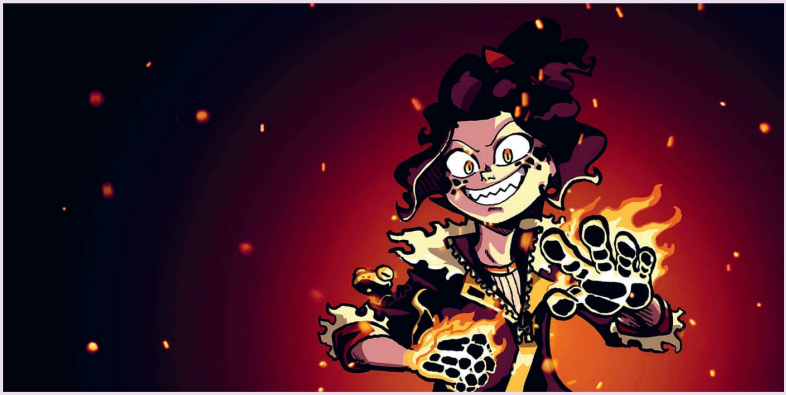
BACKSTORY VS. PLOT (GUNHILD)

Fred Tornager is the creator of Gunhild. In 2021, Fred won the Best Newcomer Award, a.k.a. the Claus Deleuran Comic Debut Award.

“To me, manga is a style of creating comics: layouts, choice of moment, focus on feelings, etc. When I started Gunhild as a short story within Saturday AM’s #summerofmanga program in 2019, I knew the story I wanted to tell but it was only after being picked up for serialization that I saw the opportunities to expand the story with thematics and details that could be used for additional worldbuilding.”

- Gunhild is feared because she has fire Jotun powers and has a temper when people mistreat her. **(plot)**
- Gunhild learns about Ragnarok. **(plot)**
- Ragnarok is a series of world-ending events where most humans, gods, and Jotuns will die in a series of catastrophic natural disasters, including the world’s burning, culminating in the world’s underwater submersion. **(backstory)**
- No one will believe her because she is a Jotun and acts out. **(plot)**
- Gunhild thinks that if she can become a god like Loki, people will believe her, and she can stop Ragnarok. **(plot)**
- Loki, a god who is the son of a Jotun and a goddess, is considered untrustworthy not just because of his background as a Jotun but because of his machinations that lead to harm to humans and fellow gods, like Baldur alike. **(backstory)**
- Odin refuses to help Gunhild become a god. **(plot)**
- Realizing that no one will help her, Gunhild sets out on her journey to become a god and end Ragnarok. **(plot)**

Standoff! Gunhild confronts the god Tyr and his giant wolf, Fenris!



Gunhild is a lovable but hotheaded protagonist. She wants to save the world but few people trust her.

I'M SORRY FOR BEING A MENACE. NO WONDER EVERYBODY HATES JOTUNS...
EVERYBODY DOESN'T HATE JOTUNS... THINK OF LOKI!
ISN'T LOKI CHAINED UP IN A CAVE, BECAUSE THE GODS HATED HIM SO MUCH?
YES, BUT BEFORE THAT HE WAS A GOD, AND THE OTHER GODS RESPECTED HIM!
HM...
THEN I'M GONNA BECOME A GOD!
TO BE CONTINUED!

Gunhild, Volume 1, *both Fred Tornager*

CHARACTERS

One of the unique aspects of Japanese manga is that while it has no shortage of brave, valiant, and moral protagonists, the journey is less never-ending like Superman's and instead follows the hero before they gained their powers or mission.

When we created the heroine, Cast of Clock Striker, the first story arc has a simple plot—she wants to become a Smith and is denied by her teacher, who discourages her from following her dreams.

The arc establishes Cast's goals and obstacles while also giving us enough backstory to understand her plight while still allowing room for later stories that help to flesh out her world. For example, we never learn about Cast's father nor why the world fought in a war that nearly caused mankind's extinction. Instead, the opening story arc showcases Cast's desire to do more to help people with her burgeoning engineering talents and the prejudice she endures. She is deemed a risk due to her being differently abled (born without a left hand) and her upbringing within a poor town with limited resources. Cast's determination leads her to build a metal hand as a prosthetic that can also be used for creating the very lab experiments that the adults in her life prevent her from doing. Cast eventually becomes a Striker (apprentice) to the Smiths (warrior-engineers) and begins her adventures in the subsequent arcs of the series. She remains true to her core goal of helping people, but her journey begins with her having the skills but not having the confidence nor the means to help people legitimately.

The character in your story is crucial for telling unique stories. A large diverse cast is ultimately a great way to build a longtime fanbase but as you are building your concept you will find it more efficient having a smaller set of characters with which to anchor your story and introduce readers to your world. Therefore, establish walls that narrow the scope of what you have into what's necessary for the plot—a clear protagonist, clear objective, and at least one main obstacle (be it a person, environment, or idea). Read more about characters in chapter 2.

Original character exploration from the Saturday AM series Orisha, by Huzayfa Umar

TYPES OF CHARACTERS

PROTAGONIST

The protagonist is the primary voice the reader follows as the story proceeds. They can be friendly or rude, honest or somewhat untrustworthy, human or not, but they should always be the main contender with the story that you wish to tell.

Stud, of the series Hammer, is not a bright character, nor is he the most experienced, but his ability to form metal hammer hands makes him a formidable fighter if need be. Likewise, Stud is desperate to make friends due to a sheltered life and often is naive when meeting people. That said, if his “friends” are in a difficult situation, Stud will always leap into action!

Walls for your box can help you decide which character types work well for your concept. One wall is to establish rules that your main character must meet. A few considerations for your main character:

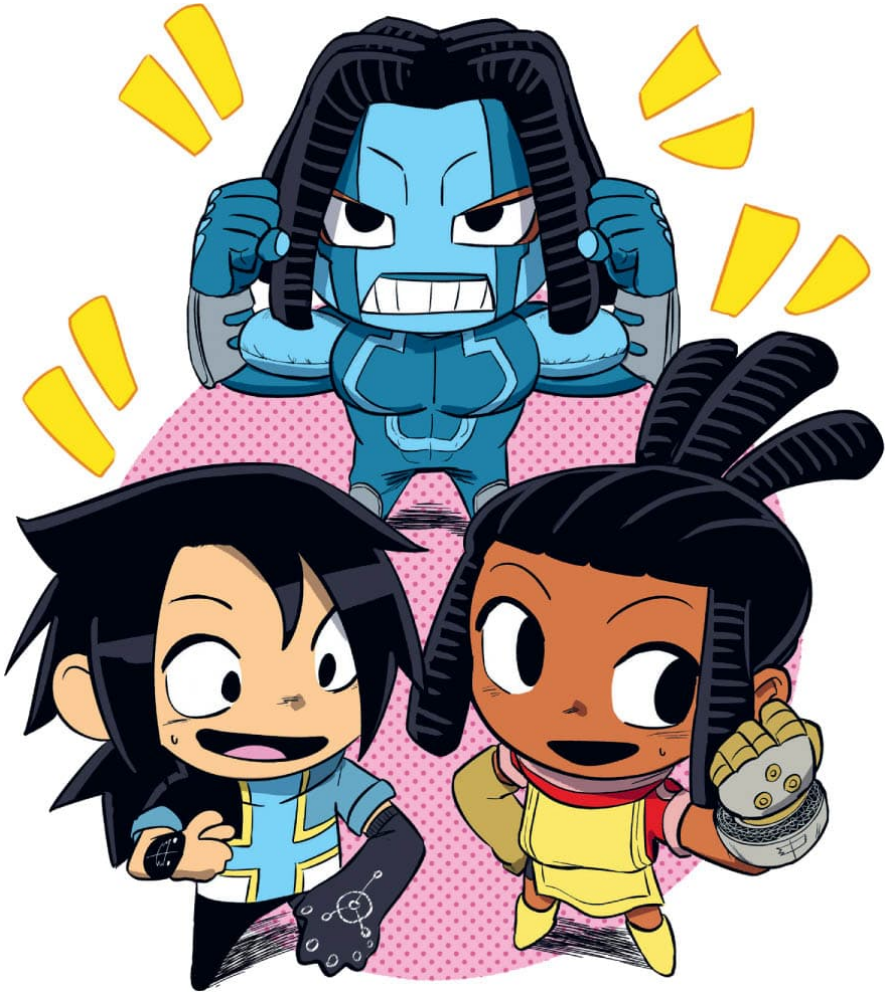
1. The goal should not be easy for them to achieve.

2. They are not the most skilled in their quest.

3. This character chooses to do the selfless thing when situations are most dire.

4. Your character is one of the more interesting characters (i.e., either because of their humor, shortcomings, or their unique personality) for this story.

Hammer's hero Stud's thirst for adventure is due to his loneliness. Hammer, Volume 3, *JeyOdin*



ANTAGONIST

The antagonist is the obstacle that gets in the way of the protagonist. This doesn't have to be a person (i.e., it could be a storm, a literal wall, etc.), but more importantly, this doesn't have to be a bad person. Remember, great villains *believe* in what they are doing. For example, one of the more enjoyable parts of Naruto (and other excellent manga series) is learning about the villain's past and motivation right before their defeat. Our first light novel, *Apple Black Origins*: *The Spectrum and the Spectre*, is a prequel to our popular manga Apple Black. In it, we explore the nefarious Gideon Banburi and provide a more human view of the villainous character from the series by Whyt Manga.

A few considerations for your villain(s):

1. They should have the most to gain from the hero failing.

2. The goal should be something they can obtain under easier circumstances than the hero.

3. It should be obvious to the reader why the villain's motivation is strong and seems righteous.

SUPPORTING CHARACTER(S)

This is trusted friend or an important plot point (i.e., a victim, an exposition or explanation character, etc.) that initiates or supports the protagonist's objective. Again, this doesn't have to be a human character and could be a pet or an inanimate object like a car.

Lastly, you can try something different and make the supporting character an influential figure that aids our hero.

Think of classic manga like Mazinger Z by the legendary Go Nagai, where the hero ultimately had to call the giant metallic robot to defeat the most significant threats. While the giant robot was not sentient nor did it speak, it was every bit a character in terms of drama, plot motivations, and connection to the hero.

Another example would be Saturday AM's Massively Multiplayer World of Ghosts, with the powerful beings Daedalus Bonn and Vyper Neo supporting the main character, Nilay Rao.

Considerations for your supporting characters:

1. Do they aid the hero?

2. Does their removal from the story affect the plot or the interest from readers?

3. Do they offer a challenge to the hero that forces them to grow?

Gideon Banburi is a dangerous antihero in Apple Black.

Daedalus Bonn is a massive sidekick to the hero of MMWOG. Massively Multiplayer World of Ghosts, Volume 2, *Oscar Fong*

SHORT STORY VS. SERIES

Okay, your storytelling box is coming along nicely, but one of the biggest walls must be established.

Short story? Or series?

The job of any creator is to tell a great story with a beginning, middle, and end. It can seem easy, but introducing your hero, obstacle, and supporting character *and* making them engaging is hard. Trying to do that across a chapter of fifteen to sixty pages is difficult. And wanting to do that across an entire volume can be maddening.

No, it's not impossible, but it requires that you understand how to introduce characters, pace (i.e., move the story along), and reach a conclusion that feels earned and not just ended.

WHY A SHORT STORY?

Let's cut to the chase; we recommend that your first work is a short story. No content is guaranteed to be a success, and just because Superman, One Piece, and Apple Black can have 1000+ issues, 1000+ chapters, or ten years (six volumes) of consistently published original material doesn't mean that your concept can support that level of output and longevity or will be as successful. Strong stories need to develop readers and fans; the first chapter should be a significant part of that process.

While it's rare for a first-time creator to score a long-running series, new creators are regularly discovered in Japan through short story contests or submission events, from the legendary HOP STEP award (HS Award), which ran monthly from 1985 to 1996 and gave debuts to future legends like Eiichiro Oda (One Piece) and Masashi Kishimoto (Naruto), to events like the Kodansha Manga Award as well as the Silent Manga Audition by Coamix.

In this new wall of the box we can focus on the plot of this story by removing the concerns of maintaining interest in a long-running series. This means we don't need characters who are not germane to the plot and can negate anything that doesn't directly impact the story (e.g., backstory).

Set another wall in your box for the number of pages. Yes, some short stories are sixty pages long, but your manga only needs to be as long as it takes to convey the critical information properly. By forcing yourself to work within a page count, you may be inspired to remove things that you may think are cool but don't add anything to the story. This is a good thing, as it's the sort of feedback an editor would do if your work was being published by a traditional publishing company.

NO CONTENT
IS GUARANTEED
TO BE A SUCCESS.

MAKING THE JUMP

Some creators are not only wanting to make a long-running series but wish to make a full-fledged anthology like *Weekly Shōnen Jump* and Saturday AM. While there is such a thing as strength in numbers, team dynamics, management of resources, realistic budgets, marketing, and design are all more complicated than they may seem. We recommend focusing on succeeding with your manga first before taking on this challenge.

SETTING

One of your final walls to create is setting. This has multiple meanings, so let's explore a bit:

- Where (physically) does your story take place? A specific country? A fantasy world?
- Where (era) does your story take place? Does it take place in the past? The future?
- What is the environment? Is it winter? Steampunk? A barren landscape?

Lastly, there is the notion of setting by way of a manga category. While Japanese manga has often skirted the bounds of whether a series is for teens or adults due to different cultural standards than Western societies, there is a general expectation that the type of setting for your manga will help to dictate which audience may discover it first.

Hammer, Volume 3, *JeyOdin*

MANGA CATEGORIES

While manga has all of the same genres as other comics, it is categorized by different names, depending on the intended audience.

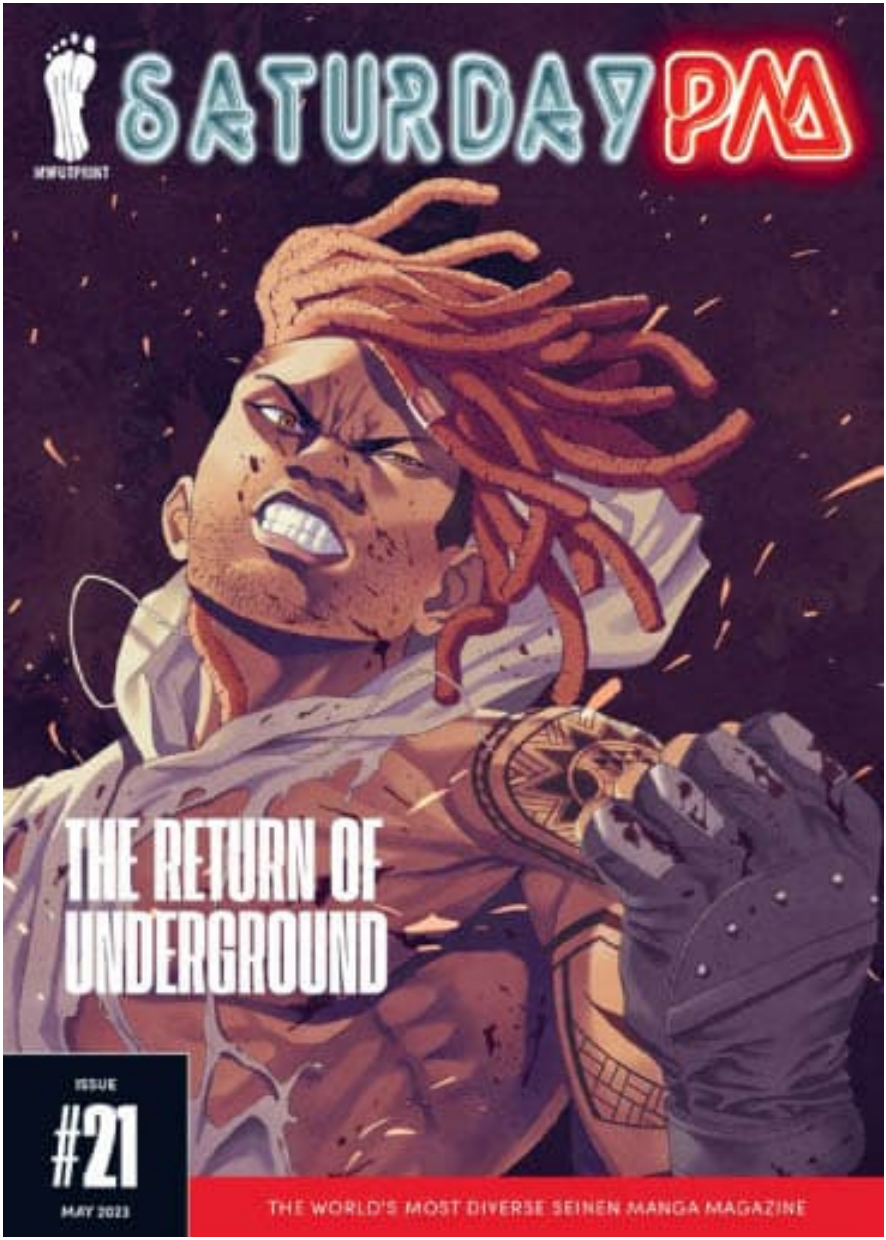
Here are the most recognized from Saturday AM and some Japanese examples:

KODOMO

Kids ages 8–12 (*CoroCoro Comic, Saikyō Jump*)

SHONEN

Pre-teens to Teens (primarily boys) ages 13–19 (*Weekly Shōnen Jump, Bessatsu Shōnen Magazine*)



SEINEN

Males ages 20 and up (*Ultra Jump, Big Comic Spirits*)

SHOUJO

Pre-teens to Teens (primarily girls) ages 13–19 (*Ribon, LaLa*)

JOSEI

Women ages 20 and up (KISS, flowers)

Note: There are many other categories in Japan such as BL or Boys Love for queer stories, Doujinshi (self-published content sometimes including unlicensed works) and Ecchi (adult stories that feature more explicit examples of sexuality).

DIVERSITY MATTERS AT RETAIL

The emergence of Danmei in Western countries highlights growing diversity within manga fandom. © Animazed 2024

While diverse manga often is viewed as meaning just racial or cultural differences, orientation is another important element of designing manga for global audiences. In Japan, manga titles featuring same-sex couples like Twittering Birds Never Fly are not only popular but have inspired adaptations in anime and live action.

Animazed cofounder Susan Barker hopes to broaden even more categories for fans and wants the store to be a safe space for every type of consumer. Her reason for exploring danmei (fantasy queer stories from Asia) is simple: “I was introduced to it by a friend and, of course, I ended up deep-diving into it.” With titles like Heaven Official’s

Blessing and Grandmaster of Demonic Cultivation, the genre has exploded across live action, donghua (Chinese manga), and even animation.

With queer representation in manga fandom growing globally, the popularity for this particular category of the genre is still small, but it is growing steadily. The novels are being licensed at a fast rate, and the merchandise is beginning to follow.

Knowing who you are targeting will help with marketing, search engine optimization, and ultimately, librarians and retailers.

Review the list of Japanese manga categories and those used by Saturday AM (see here).

While manga has all of the same genres as any other fiction, categories are sometimes confused with genres, which are genuinely specific to the Japanese manga industry.

Remember that while these categories are mainly used for demographic purposes and to target your desired audience, any genre can fit into these categories. Horror shonen. Mystery josei. Action shoujo. Literally any genre can work for any audience as long as the content is appropriate for any age considerations.

Likewise, you can create a shonen with an older character (Soul Beat for Saturday AM, Kaiju No 8 for *Jump +*, or the classic Fist of the North Star for *Weekly Shōnen Jump*). Again, if you have some idea where your work will be distributed (see here) and thus who you have a better chance of reaching, then make sure you settle on the category and setting that allows you to tell the best story for that audience.

After all, whether you are releasing your manga on a digital platform, vertical scrolling site, or as a full-fledged printed product, success will be a combination of producing the story itself as well as consumer interaction via views, sales, or both.

IS THERE A TWIST?

The final wall you'll want to consider is a basic question:

Why does this story need to exist?

Obviously, it's because you want to tell the story, but is there a deeper, more substantive idea around what the story offers that you've always wanted to see? Do you have a twist? The thing that hooks the reader in

—everything they know about your world and your characters gets turned on its head by this!

How do you even conceive a twist?

Here are some examples:

1. **CHARACTER REVELATION:** A seemingly kind character is revealed to have ulterior motives, but small hints leading up to this twist help it land without feeling contrived.
2. **THE "HIDDEN AGENDA":** A goal or mission that the protagonist has been pursuing turns out to have a deeper, darker purpose, which was subtly foreshadowed by suspicious actions or cryptic dialogue.
3. **PERSPECTIVE SHIFT:** A change in perspective reveals that the protagonist might have been in the wrong all along, forcing both the character and the reader to reconsider the entire narrative.

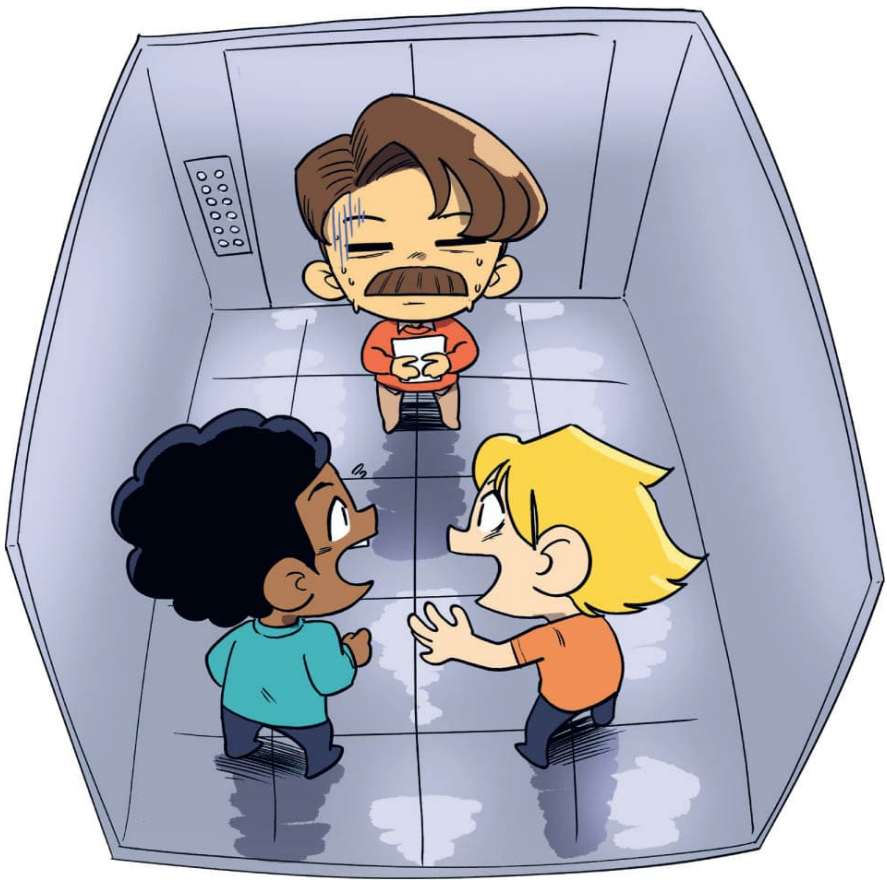
A well-crafted twist adds depth, encourages readers to revisit earlier parts of the story, and leaves a lasting impression.

IDIOTS!
DOM!
YOU THREE ALMOST BLEW IT LAST NIGHT! ISN'T THE COAST CLEAR ENOUGH?
SORRY, BOSS-- BUT AS I SAID... PIOTR AND I DID OUR PART CORRECTLY...
THE REST WAS ALL BECAUSE FENDER WAS...
SILENCE!!
ONE OF YOU CAUSE ME ANY MORE PROBLEMS...
...AND I'LL MAKE SURE YOU ALL GET SOMETHING WORSE THAN DETENTION!
THE HEIST IS SCHEDULED FOR THIS FRIDAY.
ALREADY?
BOSS, THEY HAVE STRENGTHENED THE SECURITY SINCE YESTERDAY! I... I DON'T THINK WE SHOULD RISK IT.
...
I DON'T GIVE A DAMN ABOUT WHAT YOU THINK!
FAIL AGAIN... AND I'LL KILL YOU ALL MYSELF!

Scene from Clock Striker, Volume 1, *showcasing the twist of the teacher revealed to be the antagonist*. Clock Striker, Volume 1, *Frederick L. Jones & Issaka Galadima*

THE PITCH

Finally, when your storytelling box is established and your idea is fleshed out, you'll want to test out your concept by pitching it to potential readers. The term comes from the phrase "elevator pitch," where a person should be able to sell themselves or a business idea or a creative project to the hiring/investing partner within a maximum of a few minutes—or within the length of a time to travel by elevator from one floor to the next.



What makes a pitch difficult is that it has to convey what's unique about your concept without losing the understanding of the party you are trying to interest. Remember: No pitch nor creative idea is going to work for everyone! Your only job as a creator is to present something that causes someone to want to learn more. It's that desire that has the potential to build a fanbase.

Saturday AM has streamlined the pitch process: Frame your manga

proposal by comparing them to two popular media properties. In other words, your pitch should be “My manga is this meets that,” i.e., “Transformers meets *Jurassic Park*.”

This method helps lower the chances of confusion from series consumers may never have heard of. Remember, nothing can guarantee that a reader, publisher, or journalist will like your work, but the one thing Saturday AM focuses on is ensuring that they understand and are intrigued by it.

YOUR BEST ALLY? THE LIBRARIAN

Meet Renee Scott

One of the most influential people your manga can ever benefit from is your local librarian. They are not just readers for their job but the best ones are experts of multiple genres, categories, and demographics. Also, many publishers may have books that perform modestly with stores but can become strong sellers thanks to community and school libraries.

Renee Scott is a Senior Librarian - Young Adult at the Prestigious New York Public Library and was a Judge for the first ever American Manga Awards.

It's been said that manga and young adult graphic novels are a strong gateway for young readers to discover a love for reading. Is this true in your experience and why do you think that is?

Very much so. It definitely was a gateway for me growing up. With manga, were getting stories and cultural experiences that would have never crossed our paths unless we were really searching. As a teenager in the 90s (I'll save you the math, I'm 44), I wasn't getting many stories that were appealing to me. Female leads were always either the damsel in distress, or just very cute. The only character I was relating to was Storm from The X-Men. She was really the only non-white character that wasn't a stereotype. So when *Voltron* and Sailor Moon came to the scene, we got to see a whole different set of stories that made us feel like, "Whoa, these characters are going through the same thing I'm going through, and they're doing something about it!"

What are some qualities of a book (manga or otherwise) that you feel needs to appeal to young readers (i.e., art, writing, characters, etc.)?

A different style of artwork, the flow and relatability of the story, characters that real authentic and not forced. I'm a very strict reader. If I'm not connecting with a character or the story, I'm not finishing the book. Usually the first ten pages are make or break for me. Especially for young readers, it really has to grab their attention.

Who are some of your favorite manga or YA GN authors that you think are good for young readers to discover and potentially find inspiration from?

I'm a Rumiko Takahashi fan. Ranma ½ and Maison Ikkoku were the stories that introduced me to manga and Japan. When Toonami eventually aired in the 90s, I was hooked. The anime and manga that really reflects my tastes is Magic Knight Rayearth by CLAMP. To have an

all-female manga team create such beautiful art involving magic and mecha is just gold to me. Other artists I admire and recommend are Hiromu Arakawa, Okina Baba, Ai Yazawa, and of course, Naoko Takeuchi and Osamu Tezuka.

Renee regularly attends anime and comic conventions.

What trends do you see in manga in America?

I'm very happy to see more positive representation in manga, especially now. Diversity is becoming a little bit more prominent now, even though we still have more work to do to make sure voices are being heard. I'm seeing more BIPOC characters not being drawn stereotypically, LGBTQ+ characters not being portrayed as predatory. We have seeing stories that we can relate and root for. One manga that I found myself relating to, maybe a bit too much, was My Lovesick Life as a '90s Otaku. It was really a reflection of my teenage years, including the main character's hairstyle. Hopefully, I get a similar happy ending

like the manga.

Renee was a judge at the first American Manga Awards at Anime NYC in 2024.

You were recently a judge in the first American Manga Awards. Do you think we'll see more manga from around the world and different ethnicities contributing?

I think so. The world is changing whether people like it or not. We're going have gatekeepers who feel they have the right to determine who belongs in the manga world. And I'm going to say it, you'll see those actually think they are the ones to dictate are not Asian and/or BIPOC. Pay attention who complaining the most. They do show themselves. Those are the people who need to embrace the change or be left behind as everything continues to evolve. I had my own share of detractors who tried to not prevent me from enjoying a genre that has given me so much. But I'll never stop. I want to see more BIPOC judges

and creators be able to continue to embrace anime and manga, without the gatekeeping.

How does manga capture attention?

What usually gets me hooked on a manga is the flow of the story, the art, believable characters, and if I can find myself connecting with what I'm reading. With Kagurabachi, I found myself connecting and sympathizing with Chihiro. Here was a person who had an extreme character change due to witnessing what happened to his father. Trauma changes people, and it's hard and sometimes next to impossible to go back to being the person you were before. Do I condone what he does? Of course not, but I do understand how he feels and the story just worked as being a tale of revenge. The comedic aspect of Kagurabachi kept it from being too dark. If it was just straight up violence and nothing else, it gets boring so fast. I'm a very strict reader with OCD and need to be engaged to enjoy the story. If it loses me in the first ten pages, I toss it aside without another thought. Having too much happen in one panel would be overload for me. Some people like it, but I end up losing focus. We have readers at different levels. Some are visual, others want to follow the story and guess what's going to happen next.

Renee is an avid cosplayer and often dresses up for conventions.

STORYTELLING BOX FROM CONCEPT TO COMPLETION

Using our storytelling box method, let's try it out and see how a concept can be realized from scratch:

Pitch: Batman meets Yu-Gi-Oh!

First wall (location): As our artist is Greek, we selected Greece, which allows for a European exotic feel where we can explore some unique culture.

2nd wall (hero's age): We knew we wanted a shonen, thus the lead hero would be a young Greek male character.

3rd wall (fighting style): We knew we wanted an honorable hero, thus we couldn't have a teen hero who would be able to realistically hurt or even kill villains, so we created the concept of the hero summoning powerful creatures to battle for him.

Twist: Our hero will be fighting crime, but perhaps it's tied not to revenge, but to cleaning up the damage caused by his own family!

Thus we established that the hero's crusade involves the powerful weapons summoned by his family who are part of an organized crime ring.

Concept: A shonen about a teen vigilante who uses card summons to defeat bad guys.

Artwork from the short story “MMWOG: Judge Joker” by @stompin._

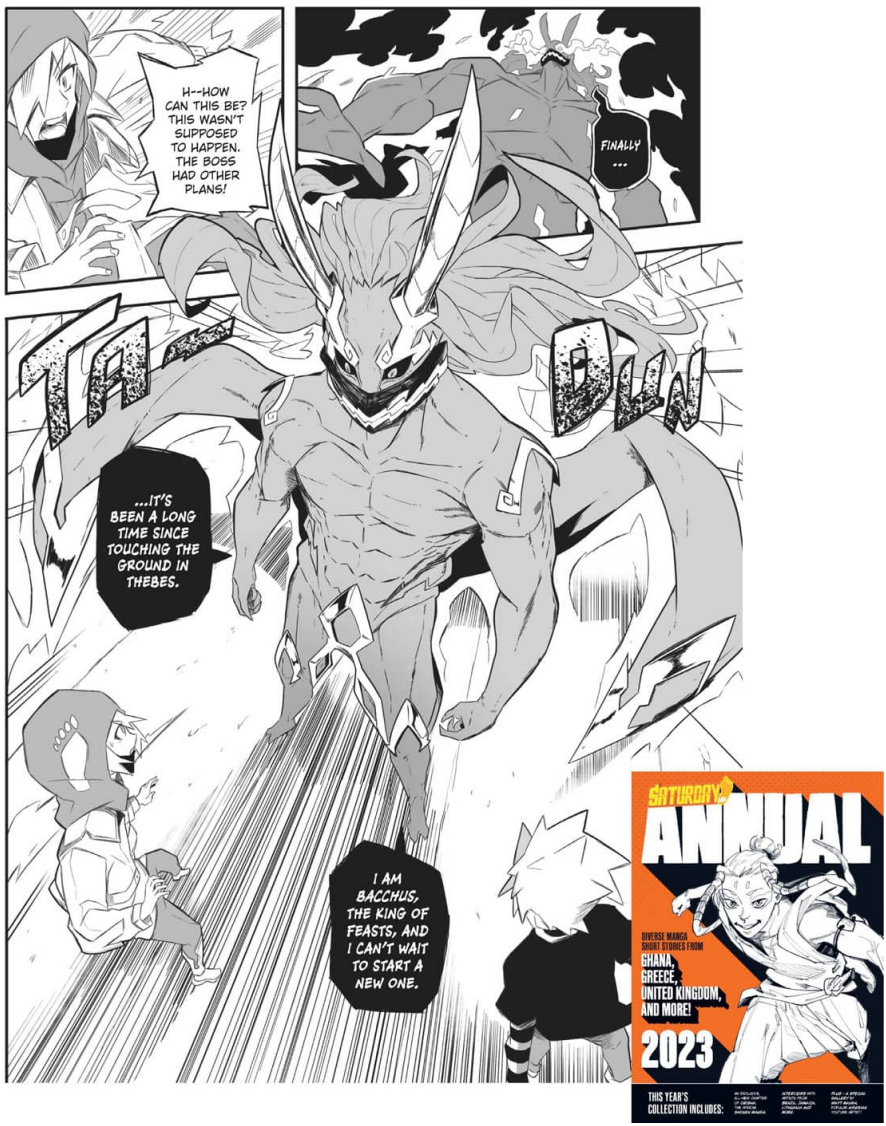
Artwork from the short story "MMWOG: Judge Joker" by @stompin._

So, in our vigilante short story, Judge Joker, we will find our hero (whom we named Varon), whom his family disowns after realizing he is not loyal to their criminal enterprises and their special secret: summoning Greek gods who aid them in their activities. When faced with potential death, Varon makes his own contract with a Greek god, Diomedes, and gains the ability to summon him when in need.

Now, Varon vows to stop the imminent threat posed by his family using

this new power.

In the twenty-one-page short story we published in *Saturday AM Annual 2023*, we introduced the vigilante's alter ego—Judge Joker—who is after a mysterious villain attacking people in Athens. During the day, our hero is a regular student in junior high, but discovers clues as to the culprit's true identity. Once the hero and villain meet—the villain is *also* able to summon a god and the two have their superhero battle via a card duel.


H--HOW CAN THIS BE? THIS WASN'T SUPPOSED TO HAPPEN. THE BOSS HAD OTHER PLANS!
FINALLY ...
TA-DUN
...IT'S BEEN A LONG TIME SINCE TOUCHING THE GROUND IN THEBES.
I AM BACCHUS, THE KING OF FEASTS, AND I CAN'T WAIT TO START A NEW ONE.
SATURDAY
ANNUAL
DIVERSE MANGA SHORT STORIES FROM GHANA, GREECE, UNITED KINGDOM, AND MORE!
2023
THIS YEAR'S COLLECTION INCLUDES:

Showcasing the twist of the story where the ghost Bacchus is a god that has been pulling the strings all along; RIGHT: Read the full story in Saturday AM

USE THE QR CODE FOR DISCUSSION ON EDITORIAL GUIDANCE + STORYTELLING BOX.

In the next chapter we'll discuss how to develop your manga characters!

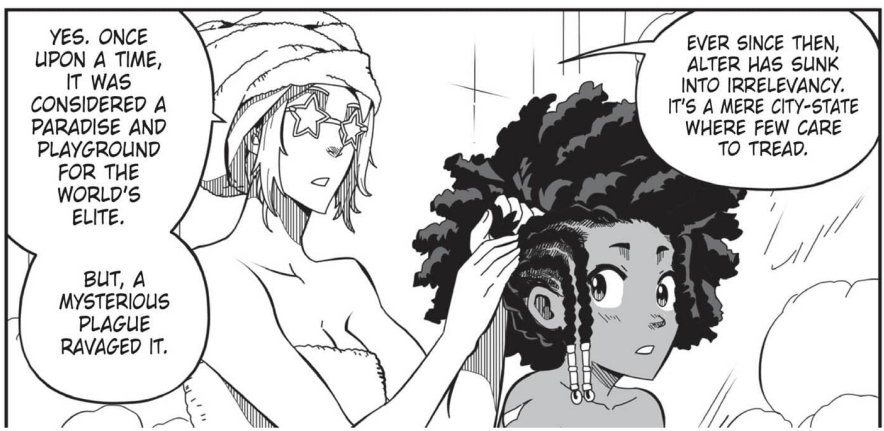
WHY ME-HE-HE-HE?!
MANGA CLUB
WOW, THESE GUYS ARE REAL DOWNERS.
NO MATTER! I JUST FINISHED THE FIRST CHAPTER OF MY MAGNUM OPUS!
THEY'RE GONNA BE SO BLOWN AWAY THAT I'M GONNA SHOOT TO THE TOP OF THE MANGA CLUB AND GET AN ANIME!
SLAP!
悪魔の子
DEMON KID
KAISUYA
CHECK IF YOU NEED TO. I KNOW IT'S INCREDIBLE.
OKAY, LET'S SEE...

...THIS!
THIS IS...
NOT GOOD ENOUGH FOR THE MANGA CLUB.
SLAP!
DEMON KID KATSUYA
REJECTED
WHAT?! WHY NOT?!
HEY! I'M KATSUYA TERANO! SON OF A DEMON KING! I FIGHT FOR MY FRIENDS! YEAH!
THE HERO IS TOO BLAND AND GENERIC!
GIVE HIM TILL CHAPTER 30!
THAT'S NOT HOW IT WORKS! CHARACTERS HAVE TO BE ENGAGING FROM THE BEGINNING! WITHOUT A STRONG START YOU'LL BE CANCELED BY CHAPTER 12 IF YOU'RE LUCKY.
THAT'S WHAT HAPPENED TO EVERYONE OUT THERE ALL SAD LOOKING.
YOU'RE FREE TO JOIN THEM AND COME BACK WHEN YOU'VE IMPROVED.
HE DIDN'T EVEN SEE HIS FINAL FORM...

CHAPTER 02
DEVELOPING CHARACTERS

GREAT CHARACTERS ARE THE ENGINE OF GREAT STORIES!

The scene you see above is a simple one—Cast, the lead heroine of Clock Striker, is having her hair braided by her new mentor, Ms. Clock. But, what has made this panel so popular among the many fans of the manga is the vulnerability of a Black female who entrusting the maintenance of her hair to a woman who is not her mother, friend, or even relative. This moment is something that women both young and old can relate to, but that is particularly genuine among people of color whose hair texture is not only different but has rarely ever been seen inside of a manga.


YES. ONCE UPON A TIME, IT WAS CONSIDERED A PARADISE AND PLAYGROUND FOR THE WORLD'S ELITE.
BUT, A MYSTERIOUS PLAGUE RAVAGED IT.
EVER SINCE THEN, ALTER HAS SUNK INTO IRRELEVANCY. IT'S A MERE CITY-STATE WHERE FEW CARE TO TREAD.

In this scene, Ms. Clock is helping Cast do her hair, a relatable moment to the audience.

Cast is one of Saturday AM's most popular heroines and Clock Striker is one of the most popular series because we see Cast through many aspects. She's a proud Black female but she is also shy, self-conscious, lonely, and yet, still brave.

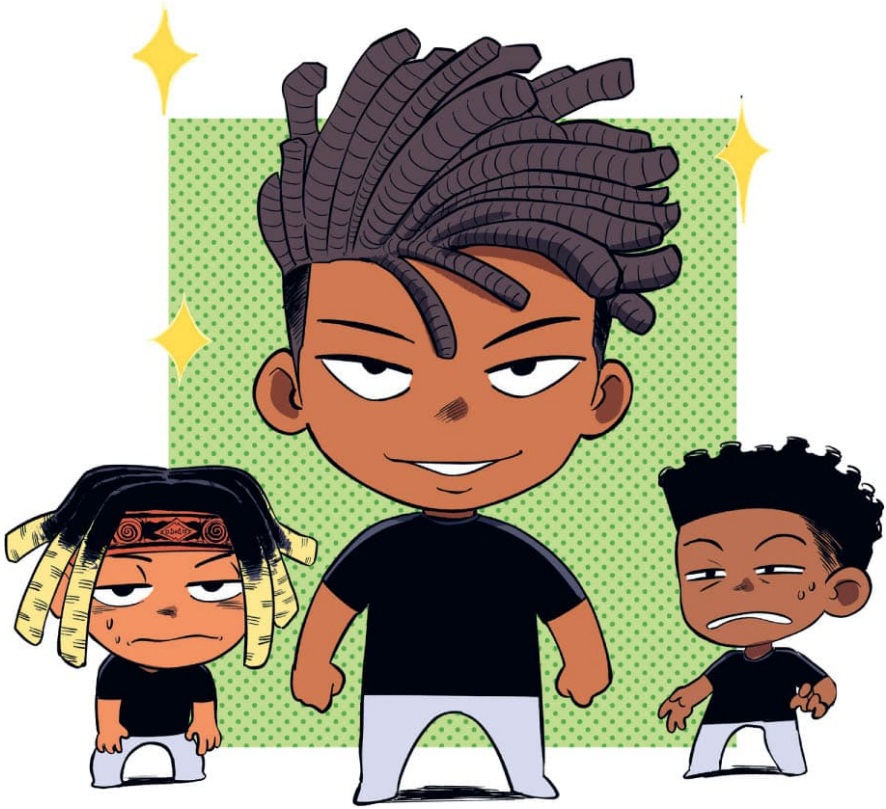
A great manga isn't just about clever concepts but the captivating characters who make the storylines so much more interesting!

A number of factors that can affect a series or story's chance for success:

- Great artwork
- Recognizable creator
- Truly innovative concept and execution

But, no matter what—the heart of the story has to rest with your protagonist, as it's their story too and what they experience and how they deal with it is as important as how you, the creator, describe it.

Let’s delve into insights from our top artists on designing their characters. This will help you draw readers deeper into your world with the sort of protagonists that not only elevates a story but may entice readers to go deeper in supporting your work.



MAKING YOUR PROTAGONIST A STAR!

WHO IS DRIVING YOUR STORY?

Ensure your protagonist drives the narrative with decisive actions, engaging in tense and consequential choices that propel the story and contribute to character development, including potential character arcs. Assigning goals and desires to your character fosters audience connection, providing insight into motives. Characters may have shared goals for alliances and personal goals that define their essence. Delve into the reasons behind these goals to enrich storytelling.

MAKE SURE YOUR HERO HAS STAR POWER!

Think about the most popular manga and comic book heroes. They usually have a design that stands out and in many ways, is iconic. Not easy. But, noticeable. Imagine if you, your friend, or your parents were walking down a toy aisle looking for a collectible of your favorite hero. The name of the character or the series, as well as the look of the main character, should stand out enough that with limited information, someone can identify the series.

HE'S MY FRIEND! AND WHEN I WIN THIS STUPID TOURNAMENT, I'M TAKING HIM WITH ME, YOUR "HIGHNESS"!! BECAUSE EVEN IF I'M FREE...
WHAT GOOD IS FREEDOM IF I HAVE TO LIVE IT WITHOUT THE PEOPLE I CARE ABOUT?!!

Example of the main character Eli from Titan King, Volume 1, Tony Dawkins

Oftentimes, manga has been defined by unique names, spikey hair, big

eyes, thin frames, and extremely dynamic costume designs. While each of those do reflect manga tropes, a new design can eschew some or all of those things to excite a readership. Spy × Family is very unique in its normal yet stylish costume design (rare for a property in manga). Naruto stars a ninja with one of the most vibrantly colored and thus non-stealth outfits ever worn by one. Soul Beat has a strong, tall confident man with an unmistakable afro who has a pink silk cotton dress shirt and a winning smile despite his incredible strength and intimidating height as a professional boxer.

WHILE I DO BLAME THAT GUY FOR BETRAYING MY MENTOR, I'M NOT GOING TO GIVE UP ON MY MOTTO.
I DON'T UNDERSTAND WHAT'S GOING BUT--
I DO KNOW THAT WE CAME HERE BECAUSE KLAUS... THE PRINCE...WAS IN TROUBLE. I'M GOING TO SAVE HIM AS WELL AS YOU GUYS.
BUT... YOU... YOU'RE JUST A KID!
HEH, DON'T FORGET...
I'M NOT JUST ANY KID, I'M A STRIKER!
HELPING PEOPLE IS WHAT I DO!
SHK!!
AND I AM GONNA SAVE YOUR SON, MY MENTOR, AND KLAUS!
KSHH!!

Example of the main character Cast from Clock Striker, Volume 2, *Frederick L. Jones & Issaka Galadima*

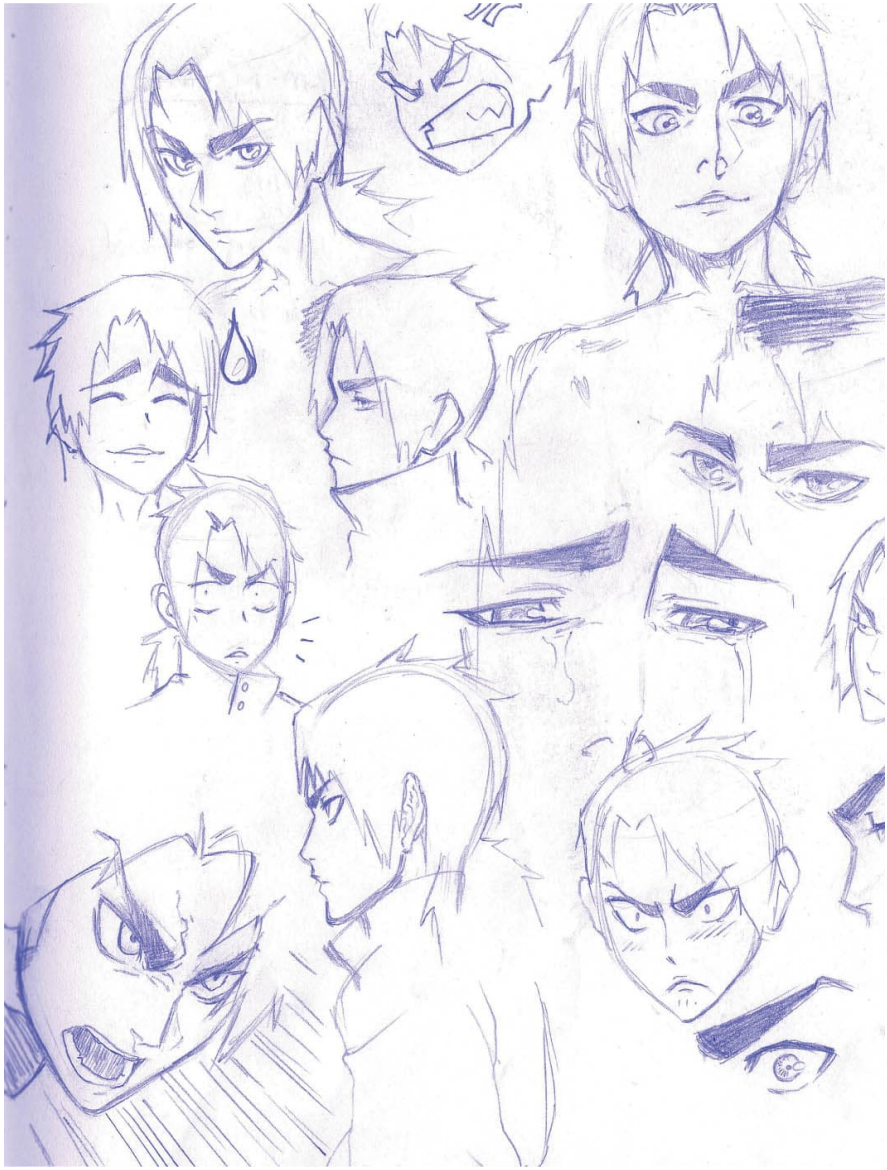
CHARACTERS: APPLE BLACK
CREATOR: ODUNZE OGUGUO
Protagonist: Sano Tamashii

Sano, a young sorcerer blessed with the arm of a god who struggles to fulfill his prophesied destiny as the trinity, savior of the world, fears he may be quite the opposite. Despite ominous visions steering him down darker paths, Sano aims to protect the world from the Infinite Night, an eternal night of chaos. Sano struggles down a path of either being a savior of the world, or its end, which adds an interesting twist to the "chosen one" trope.

What were your thoughts when developing your main characters?

Sano's design had to be simple enough to redraw quickly, reflecting his simplistic life so far, while also being memorable. Like many facets of his design, his garment is also a nod to some of the influences that birthed the character; it also helps that the garment breaks the uniformity in his design, allowing him to stand out from any other character. Sano had to look appealing but not too cool, as that wouldn't match the type of lead he is.

SANO
BENGOTE
TAMASHII
GARMENT
SUPPRESSING
IMPULSE
FROM POWERFUL
ARODIHS ARM
IMPULSE
SORCERY ENERGY



Supporting Character: Opal Wantmore

Opal Wantmore is an example of a character design that subverts expectations. Adding a colorful hairstyle to a Black female hero has made her a very popular character with fans.

Why did you choose the color scheme?

I wanted Opal's design to look hip, fashionable, and regal, with colors like white and gold that have symbolic meanings. The touch of colorful

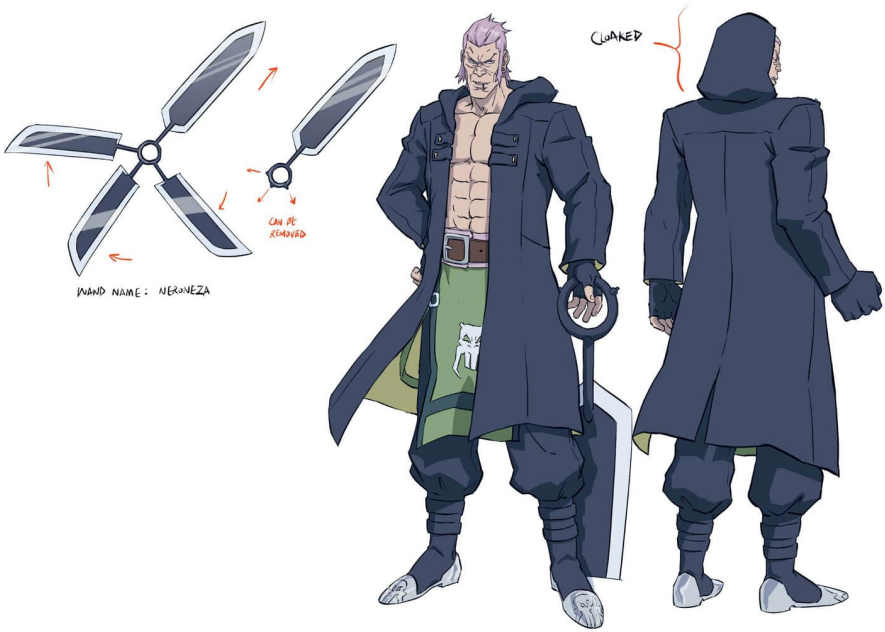
tie-dye with multiple colors also represents some of her colorful nature and her ability to copy multiple powers. Her skin tone, freckles, and other features are in place, allowing her to stand out while having some narrative reasons behind them.

Antagonist: Fattimunga

Fattimunga is not a protagonist in Apple Black but is the first villain shown in the series. As a result, his design is an example of how he is visually opposite to everything our hero has. His muscular, shirtless physique makes him look more imposing next to the slight build of the teenage hero Sano.

What elements did you include to make your character stand out?

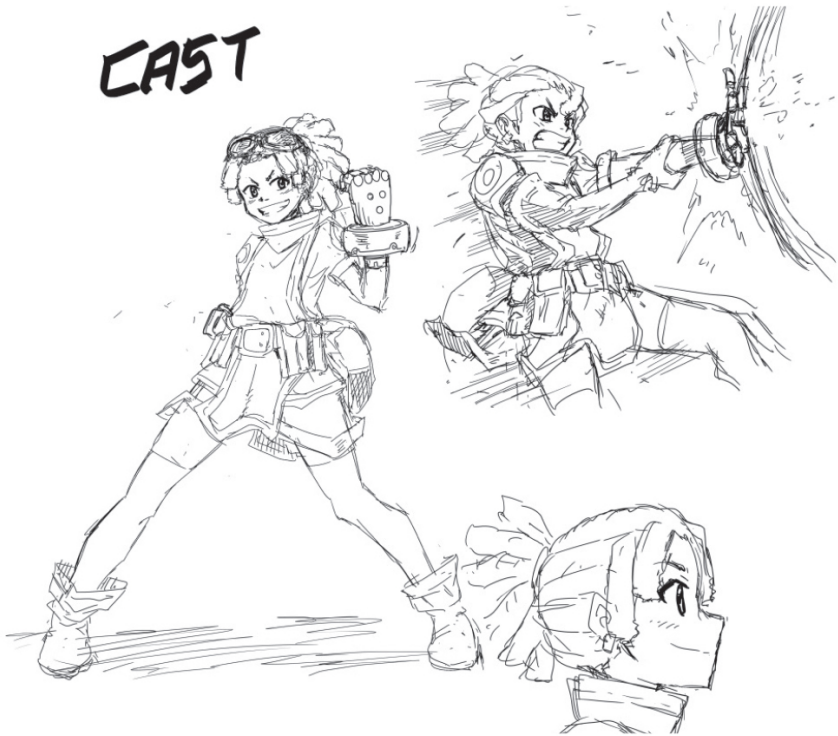
Fattimunga's look had one of the most iterations of any Apple Black character. I wanted his rough exterior and nature to contrast his wits and technological prowess. I wanted him to look like a mercenary with an ugly grin and pink hair contradicting everything, suggesting he had a fun and vibrant mind.

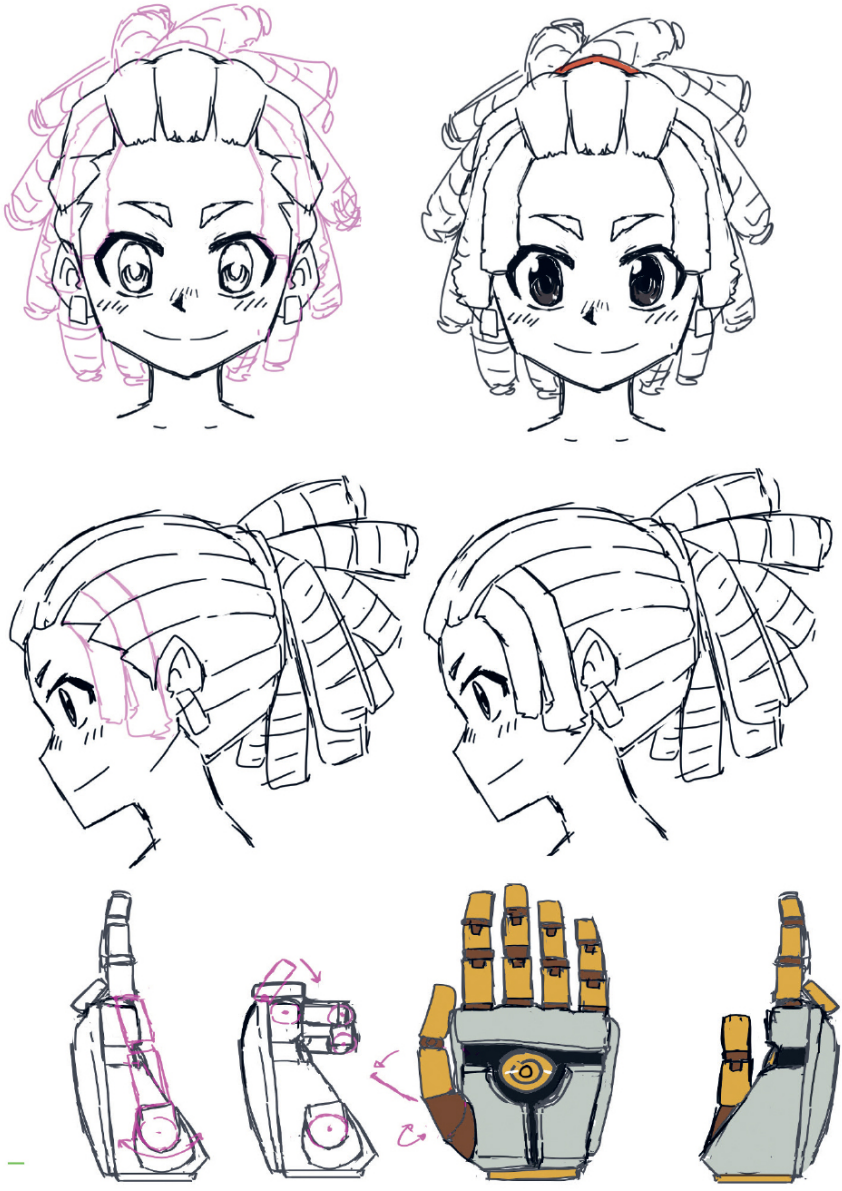


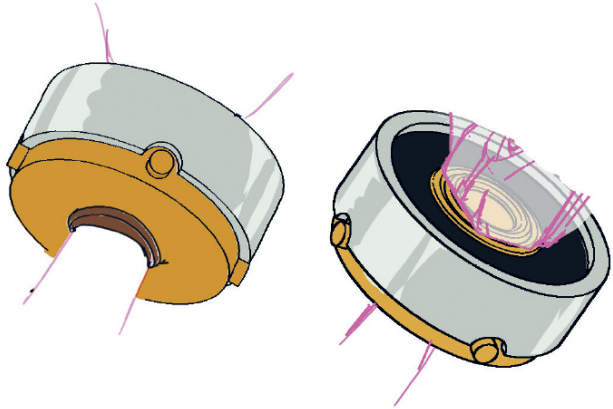
BOTH EARS
6'4"
GRUDON
FATTIMUNGA

CHARACTERS: CLOCK STRIKER
CREATOR: ISSAKA GALADIMA
Protagonist: Cast

A smart preteen tomboy who carries tools everywhere there may be old hardware to fix, Cast loves using technology to help people. She wants to be a Smith like her mentor, Ms. Clock, a deceptively proper Englishwoman whose fighting skills and strength are deadly.







What were your thoughts when developing your main characters?

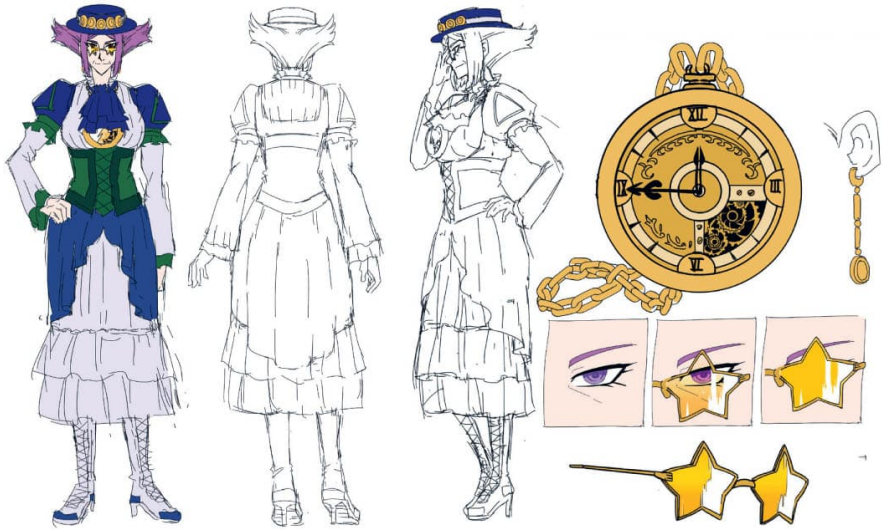
Honestly, I just try to design them so that you can get a sense of who they are right away—how they act, think, and carry themselves. I think characters should speak for themselves visually, even before they say a word. If I'm working on one and something feels too plain or predictable, I tweak it until they feel more alive and unique.

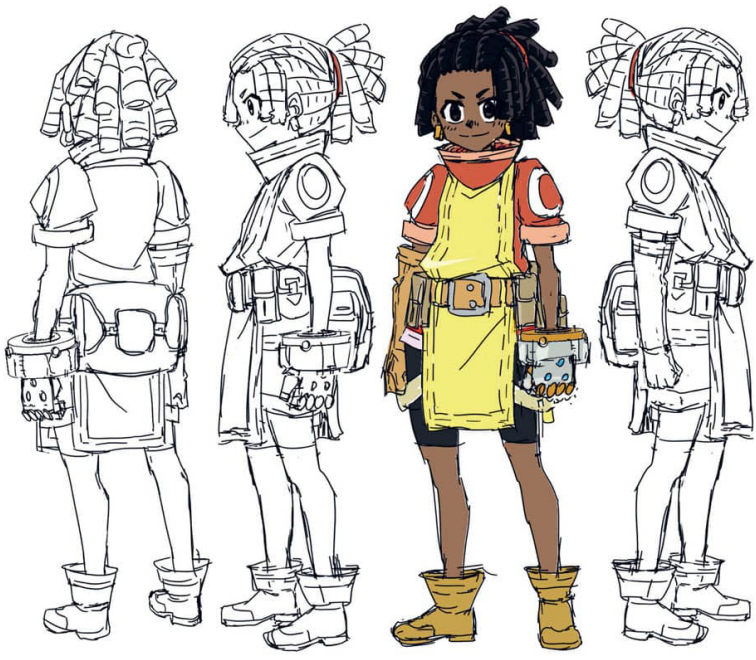
Why did you choose the color scheme?

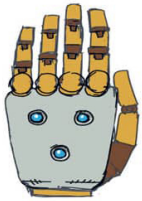
The colors I pick are all about vibes. I want them to match the character's personality and maybe even hint at their story. Sometimes I go bold and high-contrast if the character is intense, or stick to softer tones for quieter types. If the colors don't feel right, it's usually obvious, and I just keep experimenting until everything clicks.

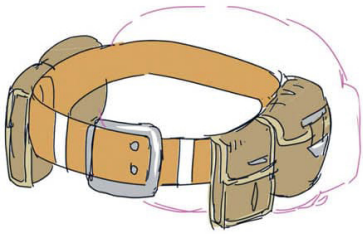
What elements did you include to make your character stand out?

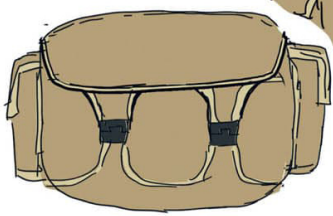
It really depends on the character. Sometimes it's their silhouette—like, they should be recognizable even from just their shadow. Other times, it's an accessory, their hairstyle, or even the way they pose. If it feels too plain or "been done before," I switch it up. There's no strict formula; it's more about what feels right for that specific character.











CHARACTERS: HAMMER
CREATOR: JEYODIN
Protagonist: Stud

Stud Hammer is a fourteen-year-old who is often left at home for weeks on end while his father travels the universe. Stud is a metal fighter and has the ability to not only turn into metal, but his fists can become giant hammers.

What were your thoughts when developing your main characters?

I was trying to create a classic shonen main character look. Something that could show homage to Goku, Luffy, and Astro Boy. I wanted to make him cute and innocent looking.

Why did you choose the color scheme?

Most shonen main characters have red in their color scheme and I wanted to stay away from that to not come off as a carbon copy. I figured green and blue would look more innocent and peaceful, not to mention more vibrant and colorful.

What elements did you include to make your character stand out?

After redrawing my character multiple times I started thinking about his silhouette more, which is why I added a swirl at in his hair.

CHARACTERS: GUNHILD
CREATOR: FRED TORNAGER
Protagonist: Gunhild

Gunhild is a Jotun whose rebellious nature is evident in her clothes as well as her fiery powers. She wants to be a god to save the world.

What were your thoughts when developing your main characters?

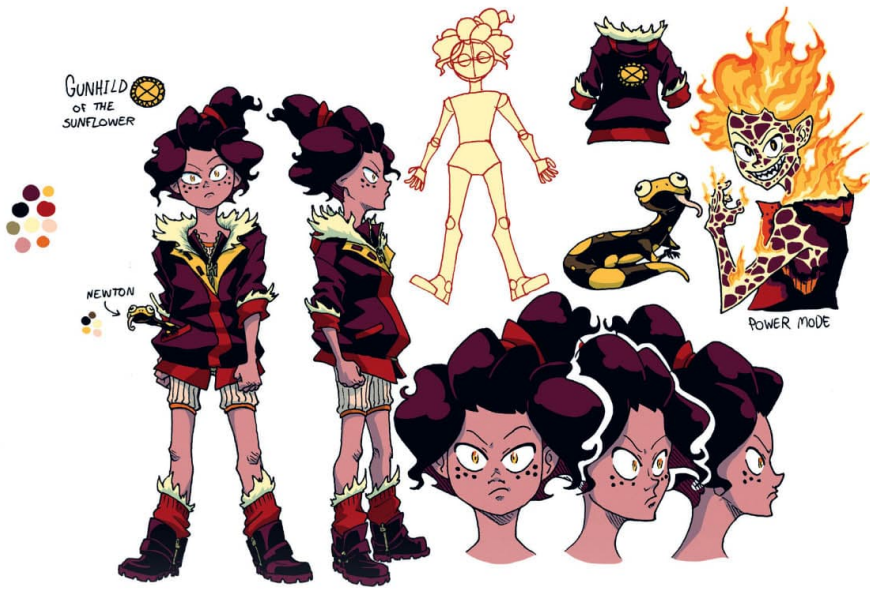
I wanted an explosive girl, who could forge her own path—the kind of personality I'd look up to as a kid.

Why did you choose the color scheme?

For the individual character colors, I chose a limited palette, typically by searching for the combination I wanted, like red-yellow-black. I wanted Gunhild's colors to invoke embers, like a fireplace waiting to be reignited.

What elements did you include to make your character stand out?

I gave her a hairstyle that would look unique in silhouette and work well on fire. The spots on her cheeks are meant to be like rocks or lumps of coal, characteristic for her race, and meant to make her stand out from the humans. The fur trim is also there to look good on fire. And the leather boots highlight her ass-kicking nature.



Antagonist/Supporting Character: Loki

The manipulative Loki is seductive yet sensitive. He is a Jotun like Gunhild.

What were your thoughts when developing your main characters?

Loki is a character who was originally a trickster but through Christian retellings has become a downright evil villain in the wider popular culture. I wanted to use this shift as a part of his character and make him a misunderstood, tragic person.

Why did you choose the color scheme?

Loki's got blue fire to differentiate from Gunhild's fire. His wind became pink. Together the blue and pink alludes to his character's genderfluid nature from the myths.

What elements did you include to make your character stand out?

Loki wears a muscleshaped breastplate. A nod to his character being from a different time and a juxtaposition to his frail body, which has grown weak from the years spent tied up in a cave. His bare feet are also a nod to his status as a prisoner and the messy hair a symbol for his fall from grace. The wild pants are the only piece of clothing that fits his true rebellious self. Loki's got a couple of tattoos that reflect the things truly important to his character.

Antagonist/Supporting Character: Thor

The boastful Thor enjoys the excesses of fun and adventure with little concern for others.

What were your thoughts when developing your main characters?

In Denmark, Thor is known as an ill-tempered redhead who loves fighting Jotuns. My version is all that seen from the perspective of a Jotun who's also got a bad temper. I wanted Thor to both represent a privileged version of Gunhild and a false hero.

Why did you choose the color scheme?

Thor's color became lightning blue, which looks better paired with his iconic red beard than classic yellow lightning.

What elements did you include to make your character stand out?

Thor is decked out in leather and studs. His cape is made from goatskin and mimics a black cloud. It also helps his silhouette stand out. His blue bangs and mustache are shaped like lightning. The buckles holding his cape in place are his personal symbol. His symbol is also echoed on his hammer and in some of his tattoos. His name spelled in runes are on his fingers. His goats are on his arms and his mortal enemy, the Midgard Worm, is on his chest, and the rest of his tattoos invoke lightning cloud imagery.

THOR
GOD OF
THUNDER
TOOTH-BARER
TOOTH GRINDER

POWER SYSTEMS IN BATTLE MANGA

While manga has many different genres, one of the most popular types of stories is the battle manga. Series like Black Clover, Attack on Titan, and the various arcs of the long-running Baki the Grappler are considered examples of this type of manga.

One of the signature aspects of battle manga (i.e., fighting manga) are the unique power systems and how characters use their abilities. Where the stories introduce new antagonists across each successive arc, the battles often play out in a tic-tac-toe strategy like chess. The strategy of the actions the fighters take are typically showcased in specific detail and provide clever twists to the story.

Here are a couple of suggestions to consider if you are making a battle manga:

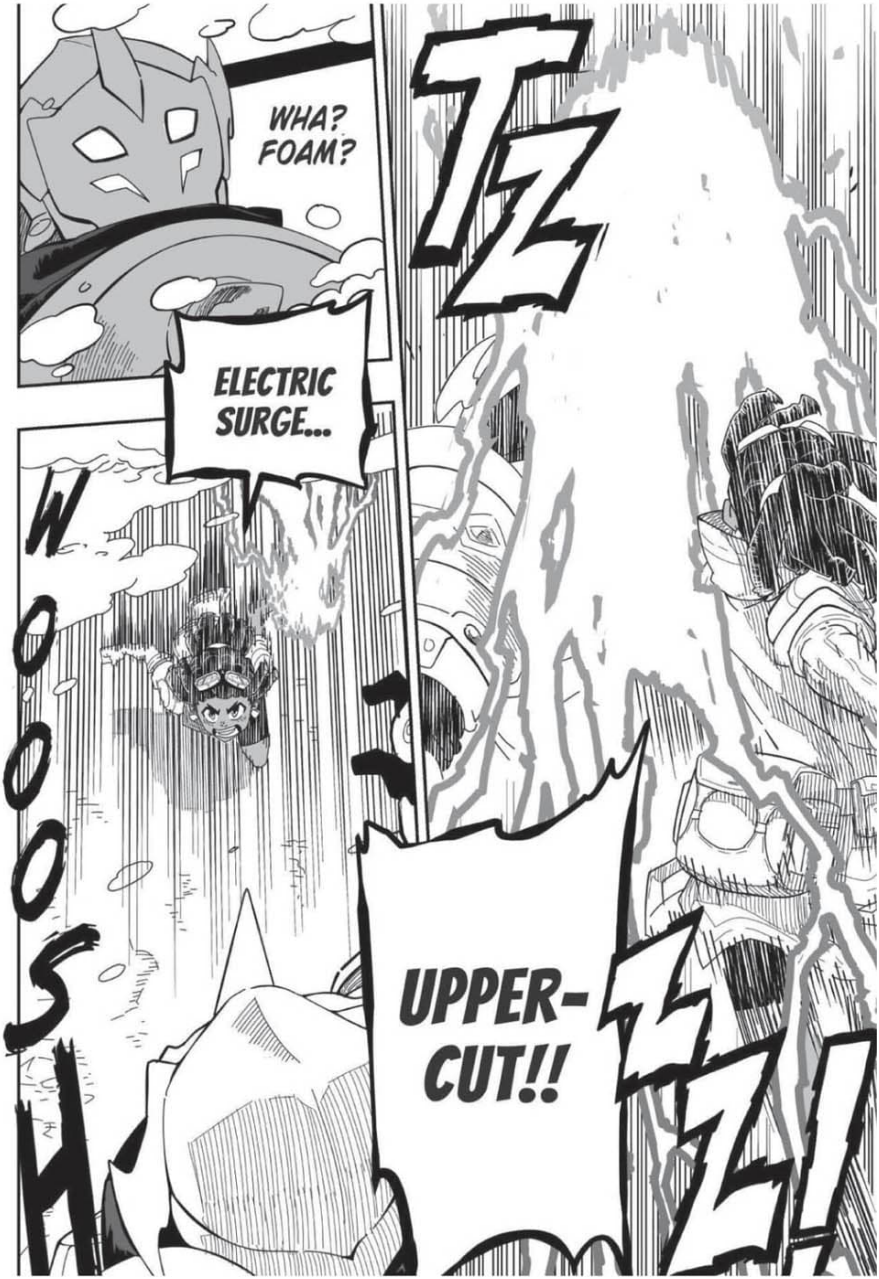
1. **THE POWERS SHOULD BE CONSISTENT**
   Naruto is a ninja and for the majority of the story, he faces other ninjas. Luffy is a pirate and faces other pirates or the Navy for a good portion of the long running series.

With Saturday AM, we have mandated that our series feel different from one another in setting, powers, and concept. This is not a mandate for any creator just looking to make their own manga sans any other creators, but it's a good reminder that for your manga to stand out, a kitchen sink approach may not be as appealing as it may seem.

The world should be relatively easy to understand for new readers, and so if your story deals with magic—keep the conflicts magic based.

Clock Striker is about a world that is living in a post-science reality or steampunk era after a great war between man and machine. Thus Cast's ingenuity within Clock Striker is that she uses her knack for building things and fixing hardware to battle other science based foes.

2. **POWERS SHOULD HAVE CLEVER USES**
   The drama in manga always comes down to the complications within our heroes' journey. The stranger or more significant the obstacles then the more exciting it is to see our protagonists overcome their struggles.



Cast from Clock Striker uses her brain and her mobile lab hand, a prosthetic that can produce scientific experiments, to help her get out of jams and attack her enemies. Her hand's abilities include producing sticky gum, wind, explosives, and electricity. Clock Striker, Volume 2, *Frederick L. Jones & Issaka Galadima*

In a manga called The Law of Ueki, the protagonist could control plants

and vegetation and thus would use the power to give them a height advantage or as a bridge and for offense and defense. In Apple Black, the series deals with magic and how every magic user's wand can be anything from a hat to a watch to a cigarette. Part of the fun of the battles in this series is seeing how the characters use their sometimes bizarre wands to fight other magic users.

3. **THE WEAKNESSES SHOULD BE OBVIOUS**
   Readers will always root for a character who has to succeed despite having vulnerabilities. But those weaknesses shouldn't be contrived or it makes the struggle seem less interesting and, frankly, less fun. Superman has seemingly no weaknesses, but whenever Kryptonite pops up, he suffers. That makes finding Kryptonite frequently in stories seem predictable and lame.

Whereas, Batman is human—literally anything could kill him, and so the drama is always there despite how cool he may seem. The reader knows that he's just a man and so a car crash, cancer, or a gunshot could be the end. In Hammer, Stud has the ability to turn his hands into hammers, fingers into nails, and even turn his body into metal.

Thus, while Stud's metal mode makes him indestructible, it also slows him down and makes his attacks less threatening. Likewise, when in water, Stud's metal body can begin to rust, which can not only affect his health but his ability to withstand attacks.

Consider what powers your characters should have and create rules for them so that the stories are more compelling. Likewise, be cautious on making your hero too powerful, as figuring out how to make the story interesting may be too difficult or reduce fan interest.

Good luck!

Stud from Hammer has the ability to turn his fists into hammers. Unfortunately, he can be slowed down by his metal hands rusting from exposure to water and oxygen. Hammer, Volume 1, *JeyOdin*

USE THE QR CODE FOR DISCUSSION ON POWER SYSTEMS.

CHARACTERS: SOUL BEAT
CREATOR: MORGANNE WALKER
Protagonist: Dante Alfonse

Everything this up-and-coming boxer does is stylish, from his dress to his afro to his lightning-fast punches. It's this confidence in his talent and determination that gives Dante the belief that he can take on the Devil and restore his friend's soul.

What were your thoughts when developing your main character?

Based on the original premise of Dante's "Inferno" meets "Disco Inferno," Dante Alfonse started out with a very obvious 70s-inspired wardrobe and over-the-top personality, and was aged up to be a full adult to better fit in with the darker themes of Hell and the afterlife he would be dealing with. Eventually I opted to "modernize" him to feel more practical and contemporary, while still maintaining tasteful elements of the iconic 70s era look like the afro, the vibrant colors, the lapels, and the flared-bottom pants; likewise, there are a few explorations into his background as a boxer, and the kinds of outfits that he might have in that profession. All that being said, Dante's design features haven't really changed that much over the years; I actually think the time I spent reckoning with my own art skills and improving my portrayal of Black characters has played as much of a role in his development as the story itself.

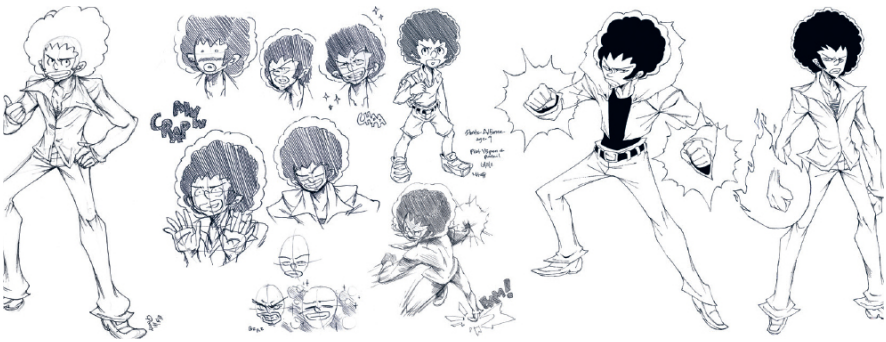
Why did you choose their color scheme?

Colors like pinks, golds, and reddish browns felt perfect for Dante and exist in many of his iterations. On the one hand, I think they look good on him based on his skin tone and wardrobe design, but also I wanted warmer, more vibrant colors to complement his passionate and playful personality traits as the charismatic protagonist of the series; in a similar vein, his palette was generally meant to contrast with the blue- and gray-toned palette of Soul Beat's cool-headed deuteragonist, Virgil, who would accompany him on his journey through Hell.

What elements did you include to make your character stand out?

Dante's afro has and always will be his most defining feature. Primarily, it's in his design because of its strong connection to both 70s culture and traditional African American hairstyles, but also to make Dante stand out against other mainstream manga characters since virtually no other characters had an afro (in a serious context at least) around the time that I created him.

ABANDON ALL HOPE, YE WHO ENTER



CHARACTERS: MMWOG
CREATOR: OSCAR FONG

Nilay Rao is a typical preteen from Raleigh-Durham, North Carolina. He loves sports and video games but not homework. He doesn't take anything too seriously until he has to. He summons his ghosts, the angry blue behemoth Daedalus Bonn and the impish Vyper Neo, on his quest to save his mother.

What were your thoughts when developing your main characters?

While Nilay Rao, Daedalus Bonn, and Vyper Neo were already pre-existing characters created by Frederick Jones, there was definitely an opportunity to give the characters a visual update for their manga debut.

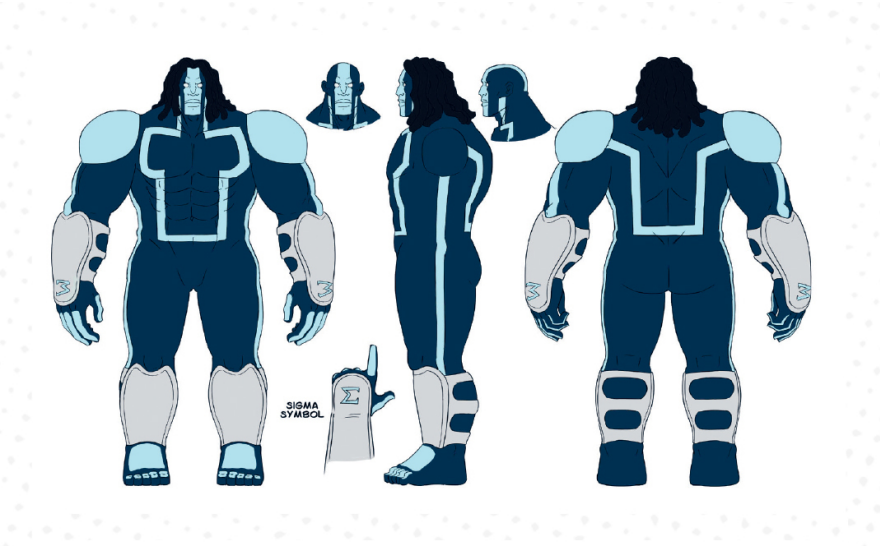
Because Vyper is the fun little devious mascot of MMWOG, there were some funky alternative directions I could have gone with, but I kept his design relatively simple. I did this so as not to make him too complex of a design, as well as keeping him bright orange to make him more fiery but still have an adorable appearance. Since Vyper didn't really have a body, giving him extended arms allowed him to be more expressive beyond just his facial expressions.

Why did you choose the color scheme?

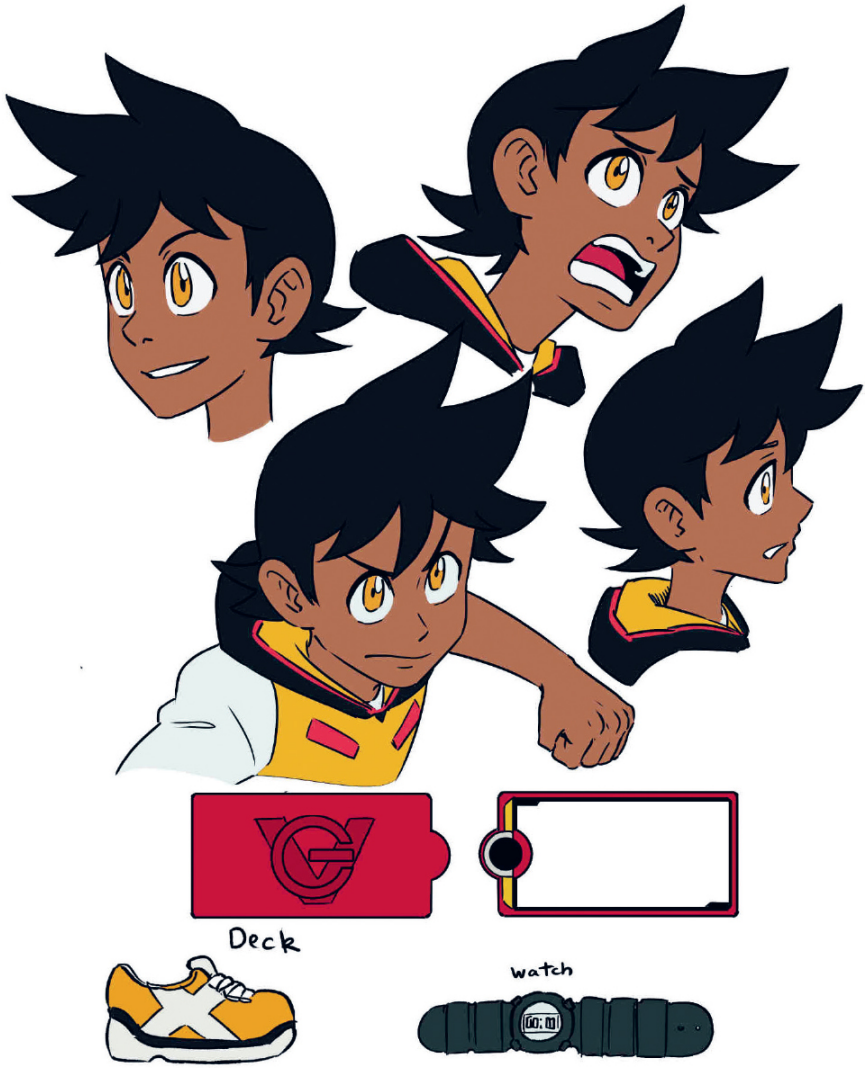
For Daedalus Bonn, giving him a dark space-blue color would help to show off his dark and tough personality. While the neon light highlights indicate a wellspring of power within him, the contrast from the dark and mysterious aspect of his dark color scheme says that he isn't really one to hide and would want his foes to fight him head on. I wanted to give him a tough, hard-boiled personality, which would still work even when he's not raging.

What elements did you include to make your character stand out?

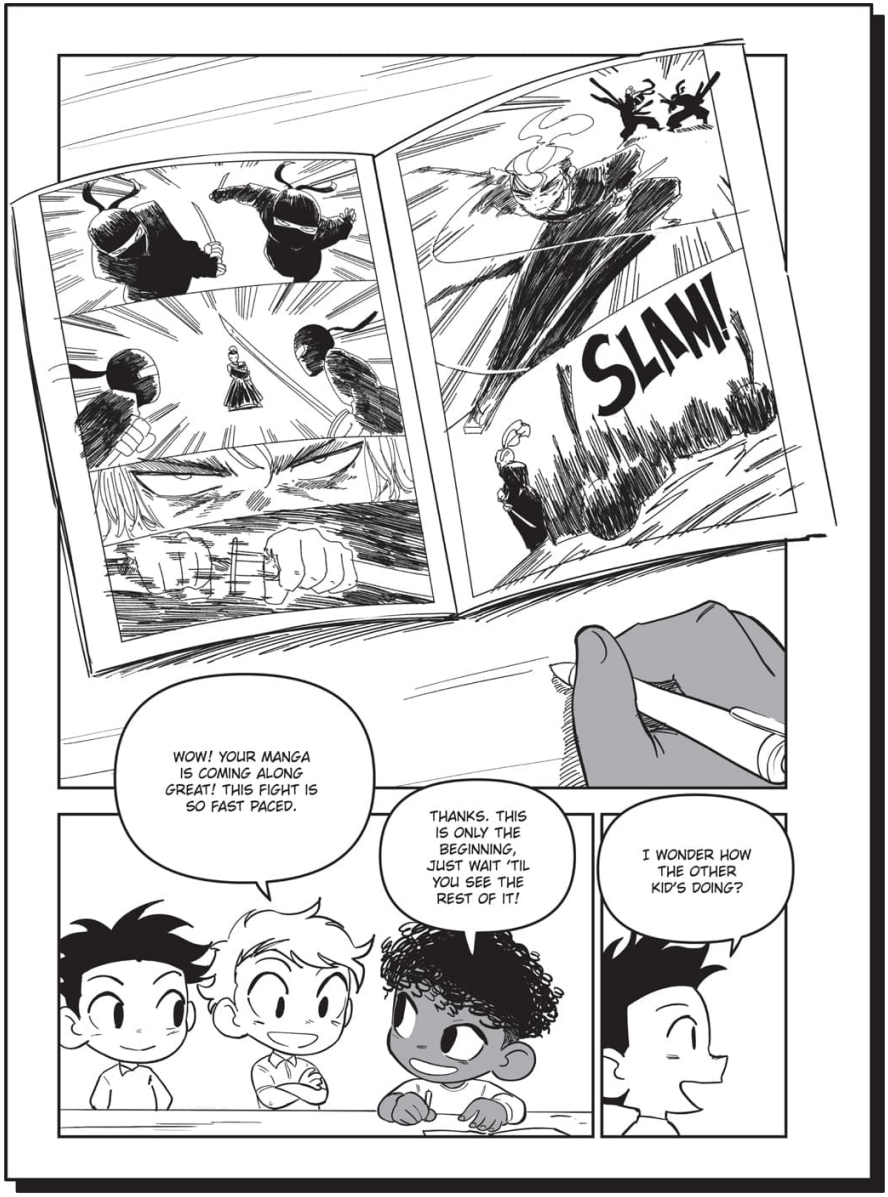
Nilay went through a large number of concepts before settling on his primary colors as it signifies his role as the primary protagonist. Since Nilay is an ordinary school kid, giving him a sporty gamer hoodie vest made sense since it fit with the theme of the series. The use of the red, blue, and yellow primary colors into his color schemes isn't really anything deep and simply signifies his role as a primary protagonist. Although his silhouette design may not stand out as well compared to other shonen protagonists, he is just an ordinary kid. However, Nilay is rarely without his two ghostly companions, so together they stand out stronger than separately.



DAEDALUS BONN - MASSIVELY MULTIPLAYER WORLD OF GHOST


Deck
watch

In the next chapter, we discuss how to create engaging layouts for your manga!


SLAM!
WOW! YOUR MANGA IS COMING ALONG GREAT! THIS FIGHT IS SO FAST PACED.
THANKS. THIS IS ONLY THE BEGINNING, JUST WAIT 'TIL YOU SEE THE REST OF IT!
I WONDER HOW THE OTHER KID'S DOING?

YOU KILLED MY FATHER!
PREPARE TO DIE!!
WHAT?! YOU'RE STILL ON THIS FIGHT? IT'S BEEN GOING ON FOR TWENTY CHAPTERS! SHOULDN'T YOU BE WRAPPING IT UP LIKE, YESTERDAY?
I STILL HAVE TWO MORE CHAPTERS TO GET THROUGH. I NEED TO CONCENTRATE!

CHAPTER
CREATING ENGAGING LAYOUTS

03

UNDERSTAND VISUAL FLOW

If you were to watch a movie and the audio is too low, too loud, or the image is too dark, then your enjoyment will suffer. For your manga concept to go to the next level, it needs to make sense, both in terms of the story and plot, but also in terms of the page layout.

There are two challenges when making a compelling work.

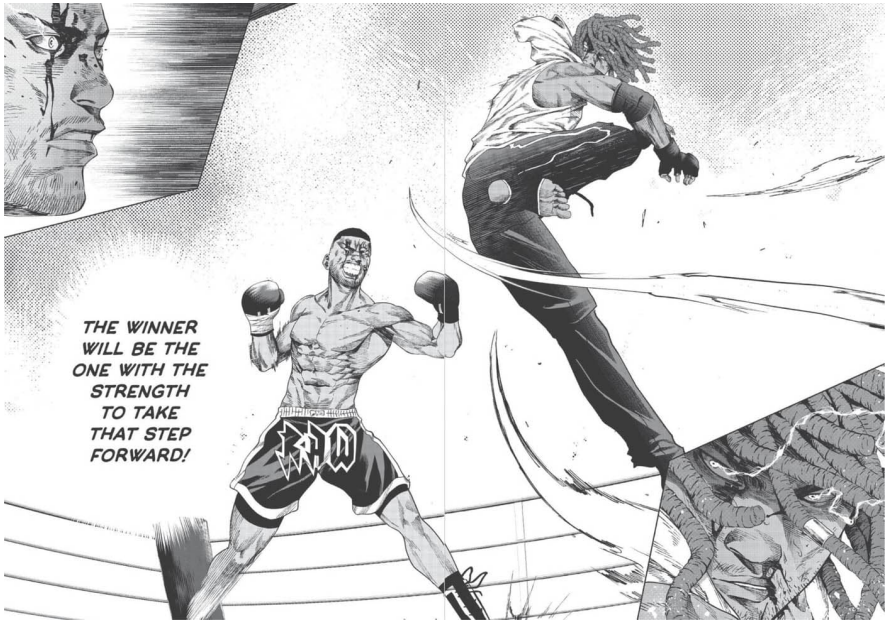
A. Is the story easy to understand?

B. Are the actions depicted easy to follow?

A manga's layout is its skeleton, the framework that shapes how your story unfolds and how your readers experience it. This chapter is all about turning a blank page into an engaging one where your story comes to life.

Creating layouts is more than just arranging panels. It's about understanding visual flow—how the reader's gaze travels across the page—and using that flow to heighten tension, build drama, or deliver a punchline. It's about balancing clarity with creativity, ensuring that your scenes are easy to follow while still surprising and delighting your audience.

By mastering layouts, you'll transform your manga into a visually captivating experience, one where every page turn draws readers deeper into your world. Ready to sketch the blueprint of your story? Let's get started!



An engaging scene from Underground, Volume 1, *JR De Bard*

PLOTTING AND SCRIPTING

Manga is frequently produced by an artist who also writes, but like most Western comics, there are plenty of works that have creative teams consisting of a team that is made up of one writer and one illustrator.

Kafka Asagiri and Sango Harukawa of Bungo Stray Dogs

One and Kyōtarō Azuma of Versus

Tsugumi Ohba and Takeshi Obata of Death Note

A writer typically does both plotting and scripting, while some teams may have the artist contribute to either.

Plotting involves laying out everything that is going to happen in the story and can involve very specific detailed actions for every panel.

Scripting involves providing the dialogue for each character and their respective speech bubbles.

Even if you have a solid creative team, it's important that both members are committed to learning more about stories, building characters, and the craft of making comics/manga. When we created Yellow Stringer, the artist Goeffrey Jean-Louis had never read a newspaper, much less been inside a news bureau. This was expected given how for his generation most content is learned and experienced online.

Example panels from Yellow Stringer, Volume 1, *Goeffrey Jean-Louis & Frederick L. Jones*

To fix this, the Yellow Stringer writer, Frederick, suggested that Goeffrey check out a series of TV shows, movies, and YouTube videos to gain a better understanding of the environment, pace, and personalities that fit the setting. This acquired knowledge affected not just backgrounds but also character designs.

Here are some common suggestions we have for new creators who want to improve:

1. Add to your Memory Palace (thanks, Sherlock!)
    - **a.** Your writing and art always start with things you've experienced or been inspired by!
    - **b.** Sign up for apps like Marvel Unlimited or *Weekly Shōnen Jump* (to name just two)!
    - **c.** Get a library card!
    - **d.** Read genres you may not normally enjoy, as all works have character, plotting, and dialogue.

2. If a writer can assist in lettering, they should, as it:
    a. Relieves the workload for the art team.
    b. Allows the creative team to see how much art may be covered up by the story and make changes.
    c. Rewrite dialogue if the art inspires a slightly different take on a scene.

While these suggestions can help strengthen a partnership, one fact that always is challenging is the preferred style of writing that artists enjoy. Some chapters or comic issues can be very detailed with the writing specifying what background characters are wearing and what the sign may be on a background building.

Other writing styles can be much less involved and provide much more room for interpretation by the artist.

It's different for every creator, as well as every pairing.

It's also different for different genres and types of comics from nonfiction to romance, western comics to manga and manga-inspired works.

On the following pages, award-winning writer Jeremy Whitley details his experiences writing for Marvel, DC, Indie, and Saturday AM.

THE MARVEL METHOD OR FULL SCRIPT?

While the Marvel Method is not a formal process, it has been discussed as a means of making comics since the 1960s, particularly among writer Stan Lee and artists Jack Kirby and Steve Ditko. Some popular DC Comics writers were known for creating complex works that utilized full scripts. While full scripts are the way most modern comics are written, the streamlined Marvel Method does aid in collaborative storytelling for both writers and artists.

Here are Saturday AM's breakdowns for how each method can best work for manga creators.

MARVEL

1. Plot Outline:
The writer provides the artist with a brief plot outline or summary, which can range from a few paragraphs to a few pages. This outline

includes the key events, character actions, and the general flow of the story.

2. Artist's Role:
The artist takes the outline and has considerable freedom to lay out the scenes, interpret pacing, and even add additional content or details in the artwork. The artist effectively becomes a co-writer, as they decide how to visually break down the story and manage much of the storytelling.

3. Scripting Dialogue:
After the artist completes the penciling of the comic (often without any dialogue), the writer revisits the pages and adds in dialogue, captions, and sound effects. This is when the actual written dialogue is finalized.

4. Lettering and Finalization:
Once the dialogue is scripted, it's added to the artwork by the letterer, and the comic is completed.

DC

1. Full Script:
The writer creates a detailed script that outlines each page and panel of the comic. The script includes a description of what happens in each panel, the setting, the actions of characters, and any visual details that the artist needs to include.

2. Dialogue and Captions:
The writer also includes the dialogue, captions, sound effects, and other text within the script. Each line of dialogue is matched to a specific panel, ensuring the writing and art are more tightly integrated from the beginning.

3. Artist's Role:
The artist's job is to follow the detailed script, interpreting the descriptions provided by the writer. While there is some creative freedom, the artist typically works within the confines of what the writer has envisioned.

4. Finalization:
The comic goes to lettering and final production with all elements tightly scripted and visualized.

WRITING FOR MARVEL, MANGA, AND YOURSELF

Jeremy Whitley is a comic book writer from Durham, North Carolina. He is a two-time Eisner-nominated writer, three-time Glyph Award winner, and most recently his graphic novel *Navigating with You* was listed as both a *USA Today* bestseller and a *School Library Journal* Best Graphic Novel of 2024. He is best known for his long-running creator-owned series Princeless as well as his critically acclaimed Marvel series The Unstoppable Wasp. His works also include the graphic novel series School for Extraterrestrial Girls, *The Dog Knight*, and over sixty issues of My Little Pony comics.

Like many professionals, Jeremy promotes his comics work at comic conventions.

We asked Jeremy two questions:

First—we've heard of the Marvel Method and the DC method of writing, considering you've written for those two and a number of other big and indie comics publishers, what do you make of those two styles and what is your way of writing?

Jeremy Whitley:
While I have written quite a bit for Marvel, I'm not particularly a fan of what is widely known as "The Marvel Method" when it comes to writing. This method usually means providing an artist with a story that isn't fully scripted. If you're a person that writes "plot first" this might be a viable way to write. As for me, I write "character first" so often what my characters are doing or saying in a given panel may have a huge

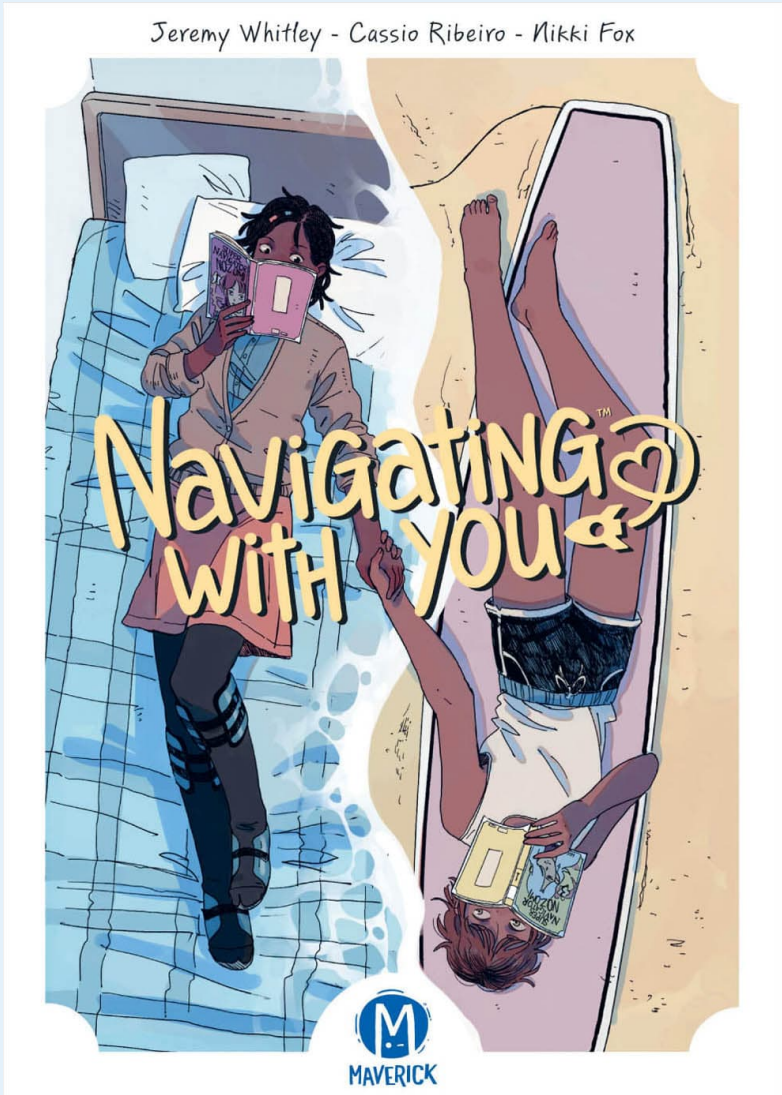
impact on the flow of the book. I prefer to hand an artist a full script.

However, I think the common misconception is that writing a full script means less collaboration with your artist. That doesn't need to be the case. Especially when you know your artist, it's possible to talk to them and collaborate from the outset, playing to their strengths and taking their input as to what a comic could and should do.

Second—as a writer, what advice do you have for younger writers on how to find and work well with an artist?

Jeremy Whitley:
I think the wisest thing that a young writer can do is get to know their artist and treat them like a collaborator and not like an employee. Look at your artist's past work. Find out what they love to draw and where their strengths are. Ask them if there's anything they just can't wait to draw. Like any job, comics art can be fun or it can be a slog. Make every project a project that you can all be passionate about.

Oh yeah, and don't blow your deadlines. Every second you are late is a second you're taking away from your team. Writers often get away with the audience never knowing they were behind, but your collaborators will always remember whose fault it is they had to pull an all-nighter or miss a family function.



Navigating With You *was named a Best Graphic Novel of 2024 by School Library Journal*.

Jeremy Whitley lent his creative talents to Titan King, Volume 3.

Apple Black Origins *features Marvel Comics writer Stephanie Williams*.

FREQUENT FLYERS

It's rare that a creator makes a hit series and only works on that one title for years. Top creators in comics and manga around the world will work on several different properties across the span of their careers and often appear at conventions to promote several works from several different publishers!

While Saturday AM is known for original manga, our folks have worked on multiple properties from different companies.

JeyOdin is the most prolific creator within Saturday AM and has produced work from Antarctic Press, Saturday AM, and Oni Press.

Jeremy Whitley's contribution to *Titan King, Volume 3* was a perfect blend of his world-building skills along with our all ages action manga title.

Finally, when it came time to launch our very first light novel, *Apple Black Origins: The Spectrum and The Spectre*, we were honored to have talented writer Stephanie Williams work with our own Whyt Manga on a story that introduced an important new female hero to one of our most popular heroes.

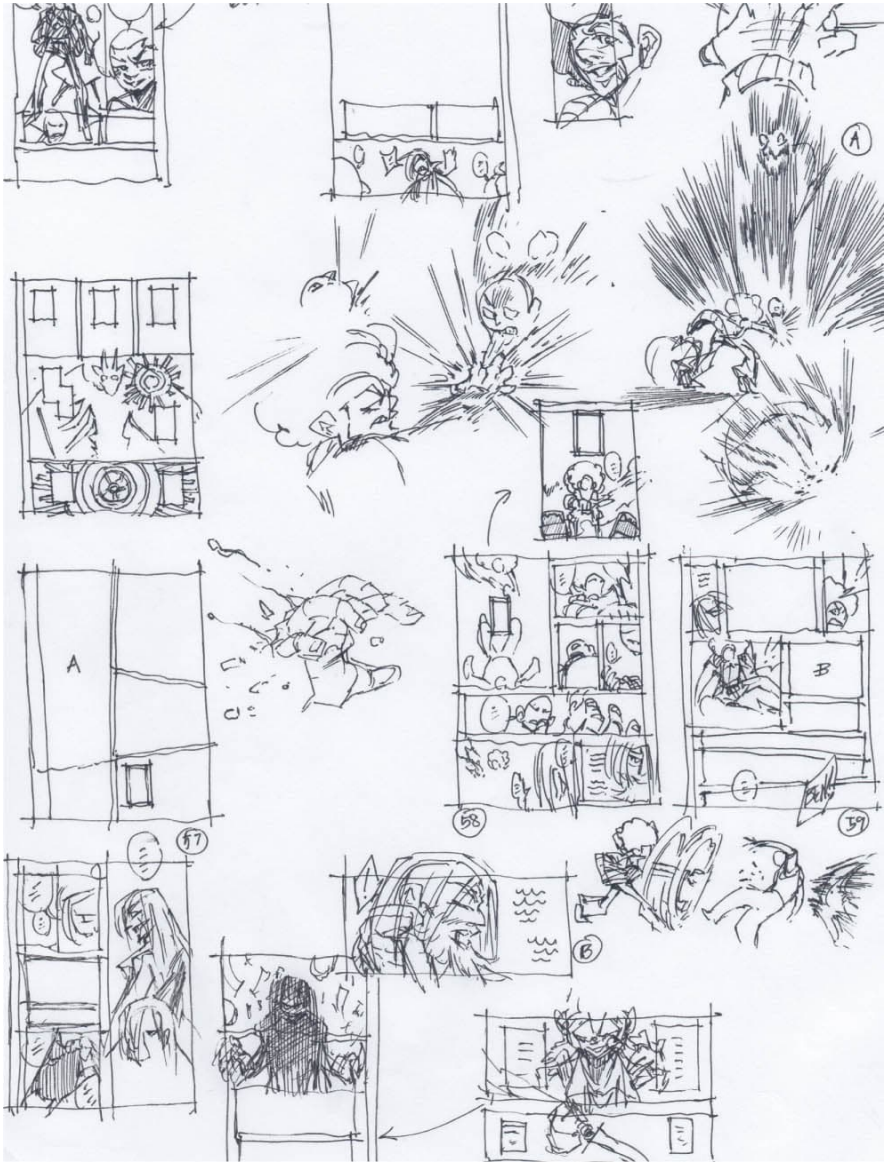
If you have a long career in manga, you will have the fortune of working with many talented artists and companies. Who knows? Maybe Saturday AM will be one of them!

Jeyodin has worked for many publishers aside from Saturday AM.

STORYBOARDS AND PAGE LAYOUTS

Now that we've discussed connecting the storytelling, let's discuss the visual portion with page layouts!

It is best practice to storyboard a manga page before executing the final version of the page. You want to do most of the brainstorming, experimenting, planning, and thinking during this process phase based on the manga script and story before drawing the actual manga page. Figure out what would be best for the panel placements and sizes, what compositions work best, camera angles, how the characters should be positioned, and more. Storyboards or sketched page thumbnails are the blueprints of the final manga pages. Various artists have various approaches to storyboarding. While studying your favorite artists and their methods, you should be able to devise a plan that works for you.



As part of the manga-making process, Soul Beat creator Morganne Walker produces thumbnails to see how the story feels from panel to panel. This also helps determine if the page count is going to limit the page layouts. The thumbnails are also a good presentation for the editor to see if the story is easy to understand visually.

MANGA READING ORIENTATION

There's a common misconception that all manga must be read from right to left. This reading orientation is predominant in Japanese

literature, and many Japanese manga follow this convention. Yet, manga can adopt various reading orientations, including left to right, or even up and down. Creators and publishers decide the orientation based on publishing considerations and regional reading habits. While most non-Japanese creators have flexibility, some may choose a right-to-left orientation as a tribute to the traditional Japanese manga they admire.

PANEL COMPOSITION AND CAMERA ANGLES

Experimenting with different camera angles for composition in your panels, illustrations, or cover art is fun. Dynamic camera angles are more challenging to pull off. However, they are more engaging to the reader when done right and, thus, more rewarding.

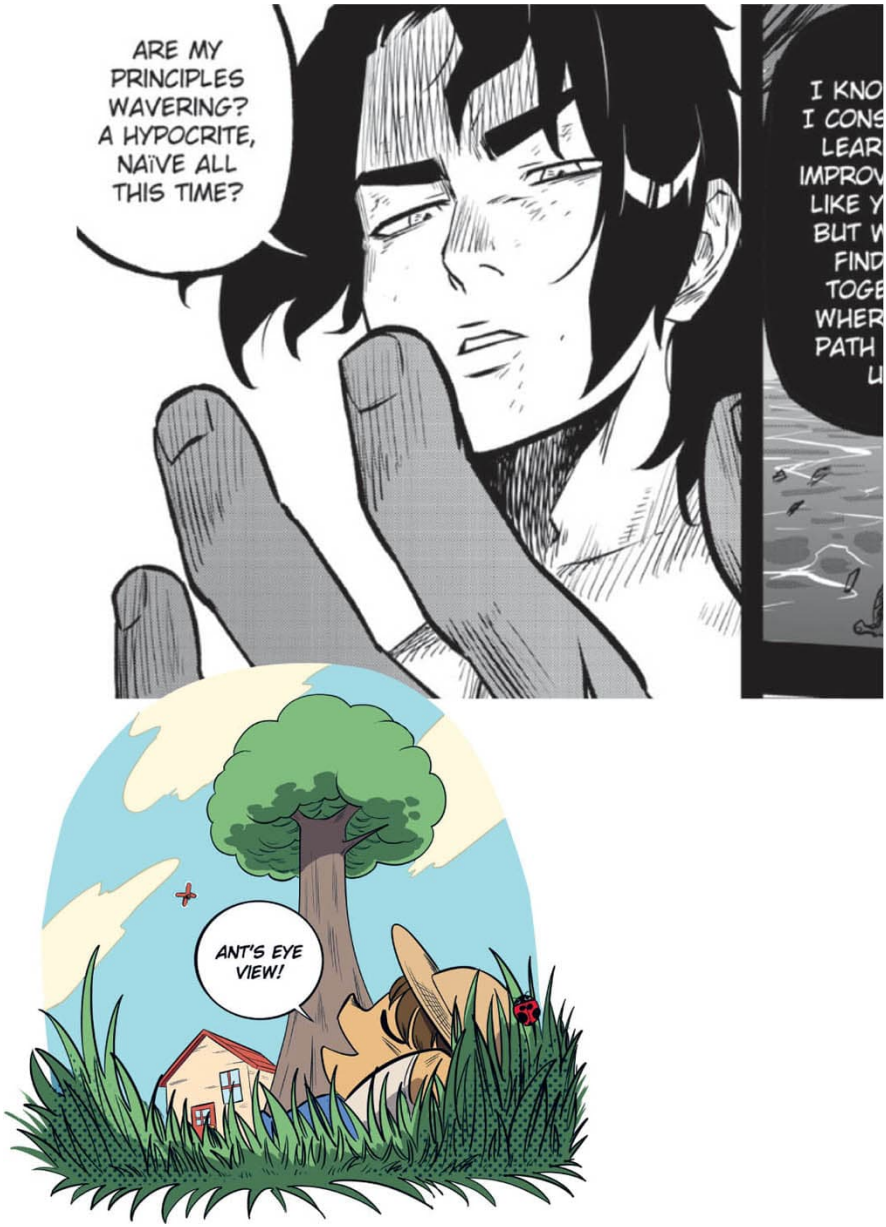
BIRD'S EYE VIEW

This view captures the scene from above, providing an expansive view. It establishes spatial relationships, emphasizes scale, and conveys a comprehensive overview of the setting.

An example of bird's eye view in Clock Striker, Volume 1, *Frederick L. Jones & Issaka Galadima*

ANT'S EYE VIEW

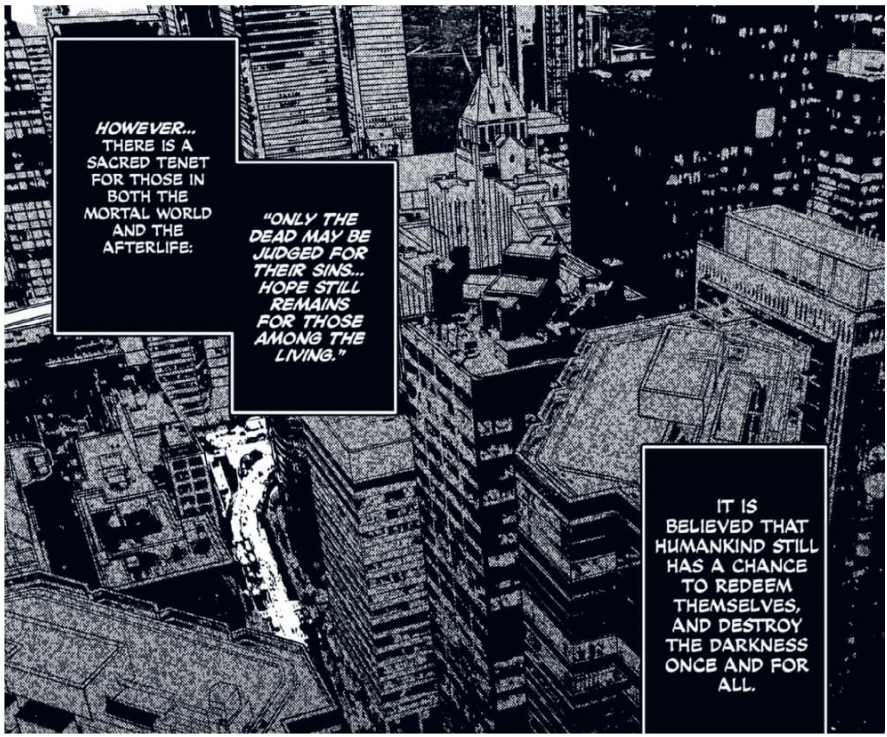
This view presents the scene from ground level, showcasing a perspective from a character's height or lower. It empowers readers to experience the world from a character's viewpoint, fostering connection and immersion.



An example of ant's eye view in Apple Black, Volume 4, *Odunze Oguguo*

ESTABLISHING SHOT

This shot offers a view to set the scene, often depicting locations or settings. It provides context, introduces the story's environment, and orients readers to the narrative space.


HOWEVER... THERE IS A SACRED TENET FOR THOSE IN BOTH THE MORTAL WORLD AND THE AFTERLIFE:
"ONLY THE DEAD MAY BE JUDGED FOR THEIR SINS... HOPE STILL REMAINS FOR THOSE AMONG THE LIVING."
IT IS BELIEVED THAT HUMANKIND STILL HAS A CHANCE TO REDEEM THEMSELVES, AND DESTROY THE DARKNESS ONCE AND FOR ALL.

Example establishing shot from Soul Beat, Volume 1, *Morganne Walker*

CANONICAL HORIZONTAL VIEW

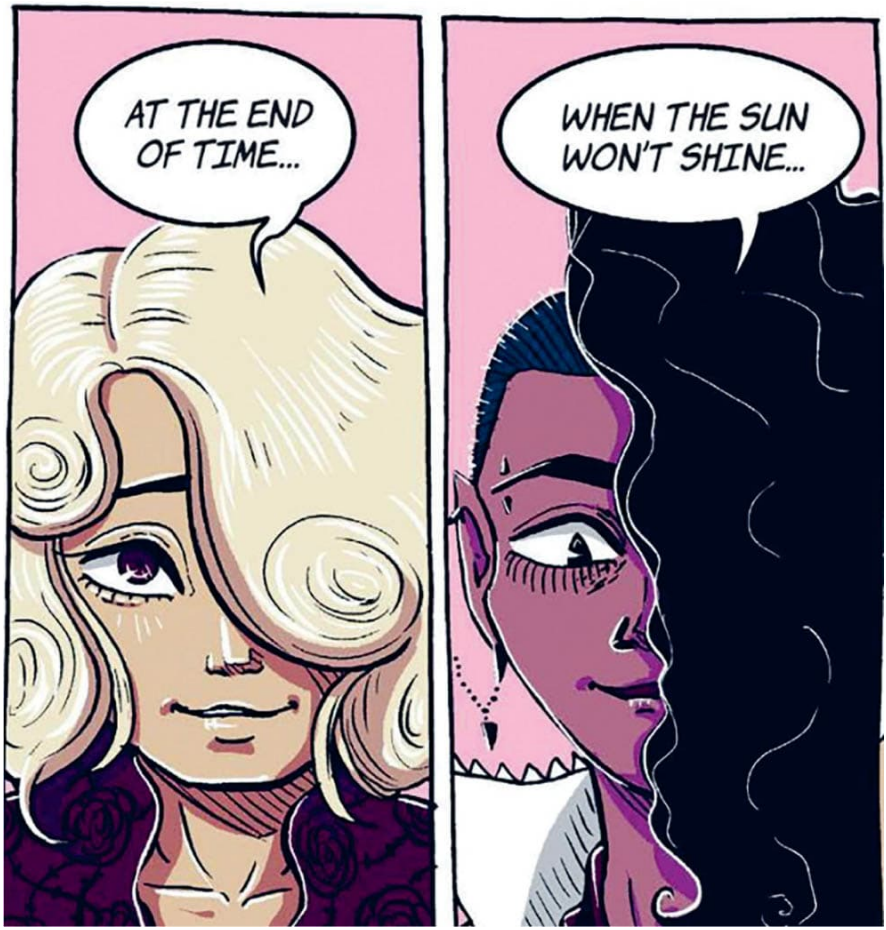
This view depicts a straightforward, eye-level shot, maintaining a level and balanced composition. This angle conveys stability, allowing readers to focus on character interactions and key story elements without distraction.

BUT CHESS IS MY FRIEND! YOU WOULD KILL HIM JUST TO BEAT A GHOST?
HE IS AN OBSTACLE! HE HAS ALWAYS BEEN IN YOUR WAY AND IF YOU WILL NOT SURRENDER YOUR DECK AND GHOST....
THAN YOUR ONLY CHOICE IS TO ELIMINATE HIM!

Example canonical horizontal view from Massively Multiplayer World of Ghosts, Volume 2, *Oscar Fong*

HEAD SHOT OR CLOSE-UP

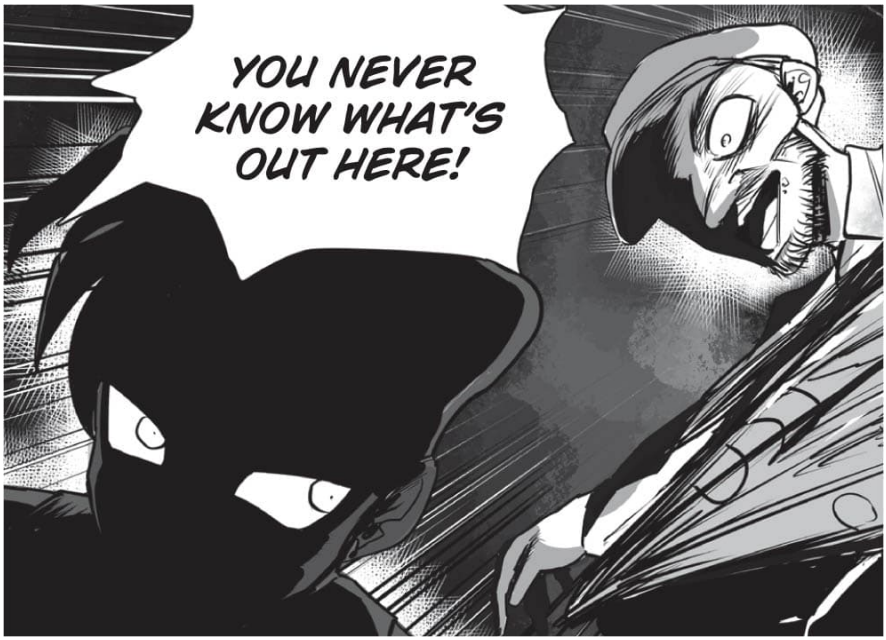
This shot zooms in on a character's face, emphasizing facial expressions and emotions. It heightens emotional impact, facilitates character connection, and accentuates nuanced reactions.



Example head shots from Gunhild, Volume 2, *Fred Tornager*

MYSTERY SHOT

This shot strategically hides a character's face to evoke curiosity or emphasize an enigmatic element. The importance of the angle is that it adds intrigue, prompting readers to speculate on a character's identity or emotional state, enhancing suspense.



Example mystery shot from Yellow Stringer, Volume 1, *Goeffrey Jean-Louis & Frederick L. Jones*

CHARACTER INTRODUCTION SHOTS

When a character graces the manga's stage for the first time, their introduction is carefully crafted. The initial panel captures the character in full or half body, engaged in action or a suggestive pose, offering a glimpse into their essence. This intentional approach serves to acquaint the audience with the character's demeanor and hints at their nature.

Mystery often shrouds a character if the author aims to withhold their full introduction, strategically building anticipation and tension. The character's initial appearance becomes a narrative teaser, leaving the audience yearning for the eventual revelation.

Notably, character introduction panels may make encore appearances in subsequent chapters, even if the character has been unveiled before. However, these repetitions subtly evolve over time, becoming more nuanced and subdued, unless the character is associated with new elements, such as unique gear or introduces a fresh, shocking twist to the storyline. This dynamic use of character introductions contributes to the storytelling rhythm, keeping readers engaged and curious about the evolving personas within the manga's universe.

Character introduction shot from Clock Striker, Volume 1,
Frederick L. Jones & Issaka Galadima

FACE-OFF PANEL SHOTS

These shots are strategically positioned side by side, typically in the same size, showcasing characters gearing up for a duel. These panels mentally prepare readers for an impending battle, featuring headshots or half-body shots. The use of ant's or bird's eye view may be incorporated to enhance the desired dramatic effect.

Apple Black, Volume 3, *Odunze Oguguo*

EXPERIMENT WITH CAMERA ANGLES

With modern conveniences like cellphones and their cameras, aspiring manga creators have an excellent opportunity to explore and experiment with various camera angles.

Frame a scene that you'd like to have in your manga with action figures or even friends and then practice taking photos with your phone to simulate the feel that you want the camera to have. Everything from where you position the subjects you are filming to the lighting in the location to the color and character design can tell you a lot about how to focus your art to achieve a desired effect.

So, yes, both photography books and how-to-draw books are fantastic tools, but we recommend you do not discount the ability to film examples. Capturing the atmosphere of scenes (i.e., how it feels) is so crucial to good storytelling and must be experienced as much as it is something to be taught.

PROFESSIONAL MANGA PAGE FORMATS

Manga page formats and templates often differ depending on the creators and publications, but the core principles and terms are usually the same. Here are some of the main ones to remember.

WHAT PIECES MAKE UP A MANGA PAGE?

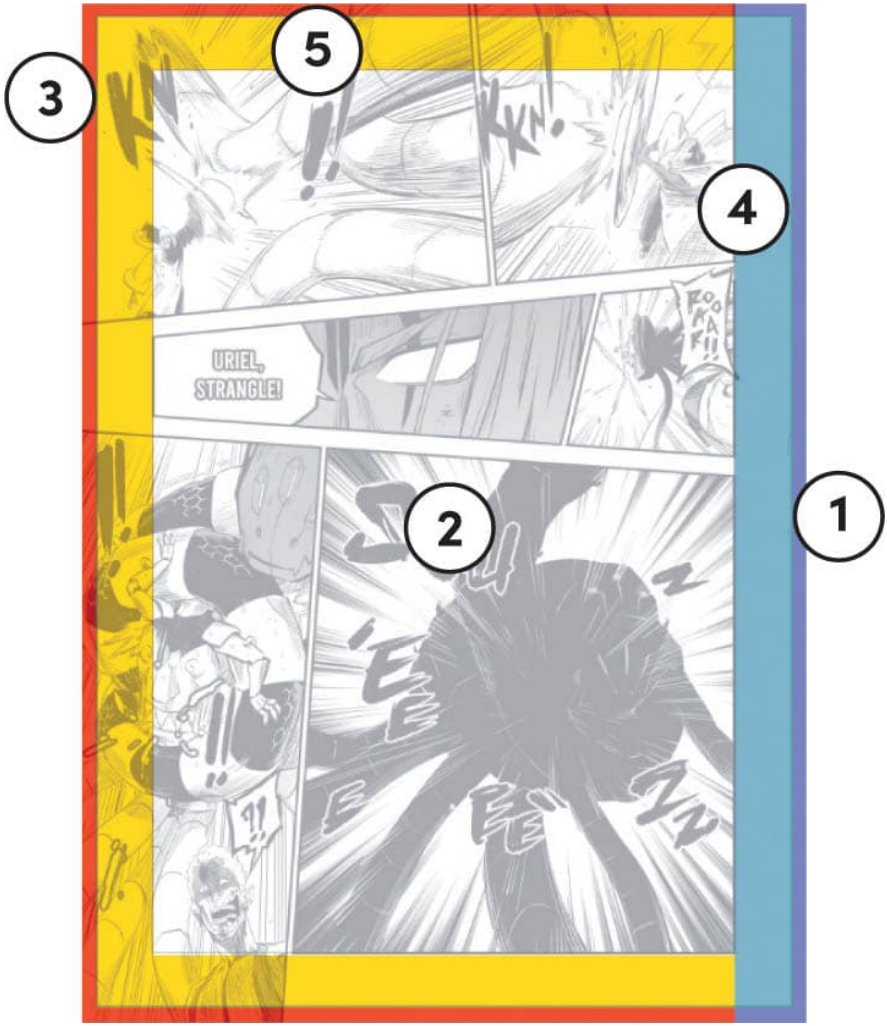
1. **Page Gutters:**
   Avoid important art or text in this area.

2. **Live Area:**
   You want most of the text and important art to appear here. All panels start here before bleeding by default.

3. **Cut-Offs:**
   These are the small areas around the pages most likely to be cut off after printing.

4. **Panel Gutters:**
   These are the spaces in between panels. Japanese manga tends to be consistent with the space between panels, and the more horizontal gutters tend to be thicker, about 150 to 200 pixels. In contrast, the more vertical gutters tend to be thinner, about 50 pixels, all at least 300 to 600 dots per inch (DPI) canvas resolutions.

5. **Panel Bleeds:**
   This is where you extend panels to the edge of the pages, usually reserved for action panels, but it is entirely up to you as a creator. As usual, be able to justify your decisions and have a method to your madness. Avoid bleeding panels toward the page gutter to avoid art getting lost after printing. This matters little if the manga is to only exist digitally. When a panel is bled, extending to every edge except the page gutter is the best practice.



HOW MANY PANELS PER PAGE?

Be very cognizant of how you position and place panels on a manga page. There are no rules on how many panels you can have on a page, but you should ring the alarm if you go over eight panels. Too many panels leads to a lack of a focal point on the page, therefore making it too chaotic to read and over-saturated. Having four to six panels on a page is the sweet spot, but you can have only one or two panels if desired. Your main goal should always be to be able to justify the decisions you're making while storyboarding the page.

There should also be a hierarchy of size and placement of the panels on a page, where the more critical panels are more detailed and more

extensive in size, drawing more attention in return.

DOUBLE-SPREAD SPLASH PAGES

Double-spread splash pages are two-page spreads in a book or print that consist of panels that spread across the page gutter onto both pages; if executed correctly, these can lead to beautiful and engaging imagery for your comics. Double-spread splash pages are often reserved for super dynamic actions and reveals in the manga, like the reveal of the whole city, a unique giant and important establishing shot, the last gasp maneuver at the climax of a battle, and so on. It is best to build tension to add to the shock factor, rewarding the reader when they flip the page to a dynamic and well-executed double-spread page. Build the habit of rewarding the reader as best as you can every time they flip a page. Double-spread pages are a great way to do this. However, try not to have too many double-spread pages, as then they would not seem as special and lose their luster, even just a little bit.

SO THAT'S WHAT'S IN HIS POCKETS!
IT'S CAN'T BE! HOW ARE YOU FREE FROM MY CONTROL?!
YOUR LINK TO OUR BODIES WAS SEVERED MOMENTS AFTER YOU LINKED WITH A FAR SUPERIOR AND HIGH IMPULSE SORCERER, LORD HELENA.
YOUR CONNECTION HAS BACKFIRED, STRENGTHENING OUR LORD AND HER STRINGS HONING CAPABILITIES. DUMMY!
S-STAY BACK! I STILL HAVE YOUR FRIENDS UNDER MY NEXT IF ANYTHING HAPPENS TO ME--
GUESS AGAIN, FOOL!
A BATTLE OF SORCERERS IS NOT JUST A ONE OF SPECIAL ABILITIES, AMONGST OTHER THINGS. IT'S A BATTLE OF EXPERIENCE, IMPULSE DURABILITY AND HONOR, WITH YOU LACK!
NEVER MESS WITH OUR LORD!
NO FAIR! THEY'RE FREE!!
BEATEN! WITHOUT ME HAVING TO BREAK IVORY AND BOTH HANDS BEHIND MY BACK!
MY PHADRA KNOWS EXACTLY WHO'S DESERVING OF RETRIBUTION. YOUR IMPULSE IS LAUGHABLE COMPARED TO MINE.
WAIT... PLEASE, I CAN'T M-MOVE!
SHOW MERCY!!
PHADRA.
ARGH!!
BLACK
WIDOW!!!

Full page spread from Apple Black, Volume 4

MORE PAGE TIPS!

- Keep the panel lines thick, clean, and parallel with each other to achieve the more mainstream Japanese manga aesthetic.
- When storyboarding, some manga artists will have the panel gutters filled in with the color black or curl the corners of the panel to signal to familiar audiences that they are witnessing a flashback scene.
- Other times, the panel is filled and overlays the art with screen tones, gray, or something similar.
- In Japanese manga, manga panels are generally four-sided only. Triangular or circular panels are rare, but nothing is off-limits.
- Sometimes, scenes may have no panels or characters; instead, sound effects, words, or speech balloons might pop out of panels for more dramatic effect. Try to have your pages exude energy and style as best you can!
- Imagine how the reader reads the panels and try to guide the path of the eyes from panel to panel seamlessly and even within the panels themselves. Understand the flow of action in a pane.

MANGA PAGE LAYOUTS

JAPANESE VS. WESTERN COMICS

In comics and manga, perspective is essential to create a sense of depth, space, and realism in storytelling. It draws the reader into the world, makes scenes more dynamic, and helps convey emotion. Various techniques are used to achieve perspective, each contributing to the overall feel of the panel or page. Let's break down the basics of how perspective is done in both comics and manga:

Vertical Flow
Japanese: Manga pages are read from right to left, top to bottom. This reading direction is consistent with traditional Japanese writing. The panels follow this same order, creating a natural flow that Japanese readers are accustomed to.

Elsewhere: Non-Japanese comics, especially in the US and Europe, are typically read from left to right, top to bottom, aligning with the direction of non-Japanese languages.

Dynamic Paneling
Japanese: Manga often uses more dynamic and varied panel layouts. Artists tend to break conventional rectangular paneling to enhance storytelling, using slanted, irregularly shaped, or overlapping panels to heighten the emotion or action. This flexibility in layout gives a unique rhythm to the pacing of a scene.

Elsewhere: Other comics, while still varied, often maintain more structured, gridlike panel arrangements. The panels are more uniformly shaped and aligned, although modern comics have begun to experiment more with this convention.

Focus on Emotion and Introspection
Japanese: Manga often dedicates entire panels or pages to emotional or atmospheric moments, using large, detailed character close-ups or symbolic imagery. "Quiet" moments where time seems to slow down are a key part of manga storytelling, allowing for deeper emotional connection.

Elsewhere: In non-Japanese comics, there's generally more emphasis on action or dialogue to move the story forward, with less focus on long pauses or introspective moments. Panels tend to be more compact, focusing on delivering quick, impactful storytelling.

This chase scene from a book in Frederick L. Jones's collection of Japanese manga is made all the more dynamic by the visual effects, which evoke the same sense of speed that the actual speed lines do. Monthly GFantasy, *December 24th, 2024*

Use of White Space

Japanese: Manga frequently employs white space around characters and in-between panels. This negative space can be used to create a sense of breathing room, focus on specific elements, or emphasize a character's emotional state. It allows the reader to pause and absorb the scene's atmosphere.

Elsewhere: Other comics tend to be more densely packed with text and imagery. There's often less white space, as the emphasis is on maximizing content per page, with frequent use of background detail or color filling in gaps.

Highlighting another title from Frederick L. Jones's collection, this scary sequence is an example of right to left direction (a.k.a. vertical flow). Big Comic Spirits, *January 8th, 2025*

Page Count and Pacing

Japanese: Manga chapters are typically serialized weekly or monthly, and individual chapters can vary in length, but often consist of fifteen to twenty pages. The pacing is slower, allowing for more gradual story development. Since manga is often published in black and white, artists can focus on detailed linework and shading rather than color.

Elsewhere: In other comics, issues are often published monthly with a standard twenty to twenty-four pages per issue. These tend to move the story along more quickly. Most non-Japanese comics are in full color, and the layout design often revolves around accommodating vibrant visuals.

Sound Effects and Lettering
Japanese: Japanese manga relies heavily on sound effects, which are integrated visually into the artwork, often blending seamlessly with the background and enhancing the impact of actions or emotions. The sound effects are usually in Japanese characters (kanji or kana), adding a unique aesthetic element.

Elsewhere: Sound effects in non-Japanese comics are often more stylized and separated from the artwork, with bold, eye-catching fonts that stand out. They usually rely on exaggerated lettering styles to convey the effect.

Flexible Panel Transitions
Japanese: Manga often utilizes varied transitions between panels, including moment-to-moment and aspect-to-aspect transitions. This allows for a more cinematic approach, capturing small, subtle changes in character expression or scene atmosphere. This approach, described by Scott McCloud in *Understanding Comics*, gives manga a more flowing, contemplative rhythm.

Elsewhere: Non-Japanese comics generally emphasize action-to-action transitions, moving quickly from one event to another. This results in faster-paced narratives, often focusing on moving the plot forward with fewer slow moments.

Black and White vs. Full-Color
Japanese: Most manga is printed in black and white, with shading techniques like screentones used to create depth, texture, and mood. Occasionally, color pages are used for special chapters or promotional purposes.

Elsewhere: Other comics are predominantly in full color, with vivid palettes used to create mood, emphasize action, or characterize the setting. This gives non-Japanese comics a more dynamic visual appeal in terms of vibrancy.

In this scene, the dynamic camera demonstrates the romantic feelings the character has and is an example of introspection and focus common in Japanese manga. Ribon, *January 2025*

In the next chapter, we discuss how to really bring your manga to life!

MOM! MOM! I JUST FINISHED ANOTHER CHAPTER!
OH! LET ME SEE IT!
IT'S... GREAT!
YOU REALLY THINK SO?
...YUH HUH.

MANGA CLUB
I NEED YOU TO SEE THE NEW CHAPTER I MADE!
WELL, LET'S SEE WHAT YOU GOT.
THIS PRESENTATION IS HORRENDOUS! YOU CAN'T PRESENT PAGES LIKE THIS TO THE READER. CLEANLINESS IS KEY WHEN IT COMES TO PRESENTATION!
SPLASH
SPLASH
SLASH
I WON'T LOSE!
HEW
I'M SORRY, BUT THIS JUST ISN'T GOOD ENOUGH.
YOUR MANGA HAS TO BE AT THE VERY LEAST PRESENTABLE IF YOU WANT TO BE A PRO AT THIS!

CHAPTER 04
BRINGING YOUR MANGA TO LIFE

HOW TO LEVEL UP YOUR STORYTELLING

Massively Multiplayer World of Ghosts, Volume 2, *Oscar Fong*

You've sketched your characters, designed your world, and drafted your storylines. But now, it's time for the most exciting and transformative step—bringing your manga to life! This chapter is where the magic happens, where your ideas leap off the page and start to move, breathe, and connect with your readers. Creating dynamic manga isn't just about drawing well; it's about crafting an immersive experience. It's in the way your characters emote, the tension in a dramatic scene, and the energy of an action sequence. It's in how your panels flow seamlessly, guiding your readers through a story they can't put down. Think of this chapter as the electricity to juice the engagement for your creative work. By the time you're finished, your manga will be more than just ink and paper—it will be a world that readers can step into, a story they'll carry with them.

So, let's dive in and breathe life into your vision!

BOOM!

BACKGROUNDS
BY KRISTINA ANDABAK AND MORGANNE WALKER

Backgrounds are a difficult skill that a good amount of artists dislike producing. It's easy to see why . . . characters and objects are already very difficult to pull off consistently. Likewise, great page layouts require a level of technical precision to allow both the story's needs as well as the scene's atmosphere to connect with the reader. Backgrounds can feel tedious and non-important especially if a battle is happening and there will be buildings destroyed or debris presented to showcase the impact of the battle.

As many manga are produced weekly or bi-weekly, then it's easy to see why some artists in manga may not enjoy rendering complicated environments. This is why many fight sequences in manga happen outside in barren or forested areas where the diversity of surroundings are not as varied.

With that said, it's an important skill and some artists may exceed at this one over others. In this section, two of our most talented artists with exceptional talent for drawing backgrounds will discuss some tips and tricks. Kristina Andabak is an alumnus of our #summerofmanga program and the creator of a josei, dark fantasy called Grimmheim. Morganne Walker is a senior member of our artist pool, and aside from having her masters in architecture, she is also the artist of a critically acclaimed shonen manga, Soul Beat.

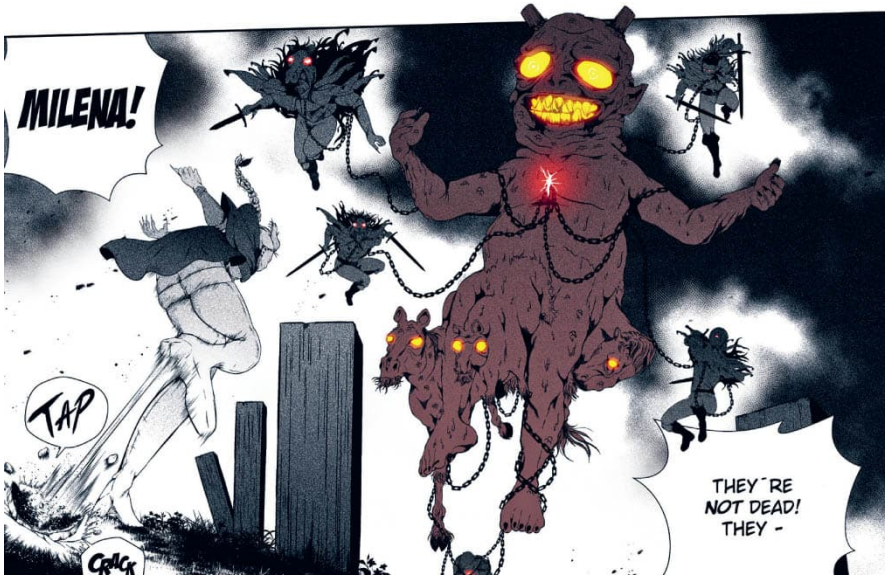
THE IMPORTANCE OF ATMOSPHERE
BY KRISTINA ANDABAK

A strong atmosphere can give the work a lot of weight and meaning. Especially if you want to write a certain genre like horror or dark fantasy, the right atmosphere can make a significant contribution to the impact of a story. The use of light and shadow is essential. Using shadows and black areas or certain lighting can give images depth. I am working on a dark fantasy story in a very dark, desolate setting. That is why it is important to me that my drawings depict a certain gloom, abandonment, and sometimes despair, so I often use a lot of dark areas, a lot of black, and very few light sources. The following rule applies to me: “Entertainment over realism.” It is not necessarily important that the light falls realistically on the characters or the environment, but rather my focus is on which emotion I want to evoke in the reader. But that does not mean that visual clarity or the flow of reading can be disrupted! Too much shadow without sufficient use of light can quickly lead to the characters disappearing into the dark background, and there is no longer any guide for the eye on the page—this disrupts the flow of reading and is a no-go.

Here is an example from my manga Grimmheim: On the top you can see how the characters in the panel are lost in the dark backgrounds and the reading flow is not so clear. On the bottom I have revised the panel and put the focus on clarity.

Before

After



Grimmheim, Volume 1, *Kristina Andabak*

NATURE AND VEGETATION
BY KRISTINA ANDABAK

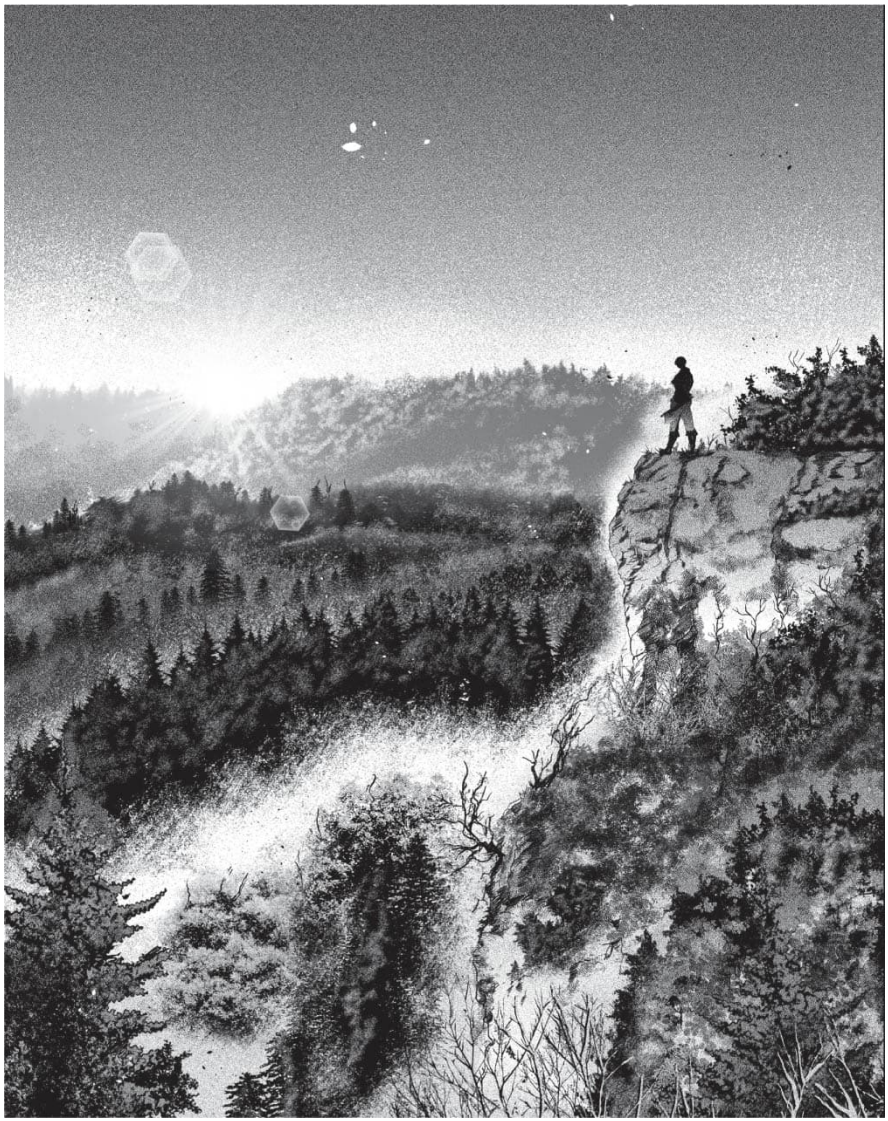
Nature and vegetation can be used to create wonderfully atmospheric backgrounds. Here, too, it is always important to think before drawing: "What mood do I want to evoke with this scene?" As soon as that is decided, it's time to design the setting. I personally love drawing forests and other natural places, because bushes, trees, shrubs, and so on grow very wildly due to their nature, and this gives me a certain amount of freedom as an illustrator when designing. Of course, a forest also has a certain structure, which is particularly noticeable when using reference photos, but they allow you more freedom in drawing than, for example, buildings, where you as an illustrator have to become a bit of an architect.

Grimmheim, Volume 1, *Kristina Andabak*

For nature backgrounds, I work with the many sets from Clip Studio Paint. There are dozens of brushes and tools that you can combine to put together your backgrounds. I use brushes for leaves, bushes, trees, and so on. To make the panel look good, I combine black and white with different shades of gray to give the image depth and contrast. Here it is advisable to look for reference images of real forests, but also of manga artists who are very experienced in drawing backgrounds. Miura, Yukimura, or Inoue would come to mind here. But don't worry: You don't have to be an experienced artist—you just have to develop a feeling for composition, for light and shadow, and ideally see every background as a character that has its own personality.

Below is an example page from Grimmheim: For a promo piece, I wanted to draw a huge forest that is supposed to reflect the vast nature

and landscape, a call to the journey that the heroine Wulfhild has to embark on. Notice the different layers of black, white, and gray to create depth.

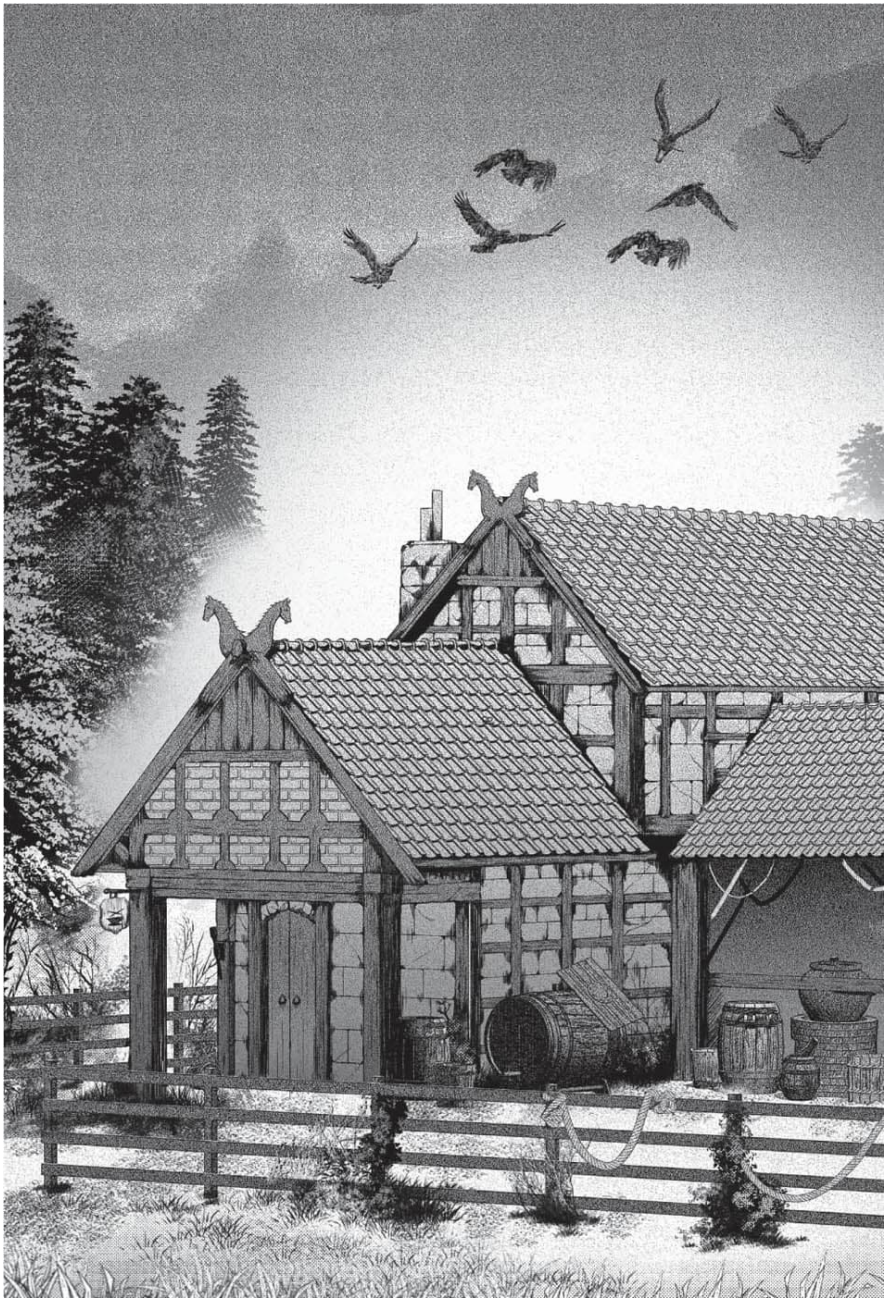


Grimmheim, Volume 1, *Kristina Andabak*

BUILDINGS AND STRUCTURES
BY KRISTINA ANDABAK

In contrast to nature and vegetation, you have to play by stricter rules when it comes to architecture. But that doesn't make it any less fun! I personally like to use 3D background models as the base. However, I would advise against just using the standard 3D backgrounds or stock images, as it will make every 3D background look the same, lacking individuality. It is better to use the assets only as a template and add details to the backgrounds that will make them unique.

Example from Grimmheim: Wulfhild's forge at the beginning of the story was based on this simple 3D model from Clip. As you can see, the background is effective but lacks individuality. When I was reworking the story, it was important to me to give the forge a unique look. I was inspired by the half-timbered buildings of Lower Saxony, the place in Germany where I come from. This allowed me to create something individual from something simple, which even carries a piece of my cultural identity with it.



Grimmheim, Volume 1, *Kristina Andabak*

GRIMMHEIM
Kapitel 1: Befleckt
YOU REALIZED YOU MISSED THE ABENDMESSE ONCE AGAIN?
PATER BERNARD WAS BESIDE HIMSELF!
IT TOOK ME A GOOD WHILE TO CALM HIM DOWN.

Grimmheim, Volume 1, *Kristina Andabak*

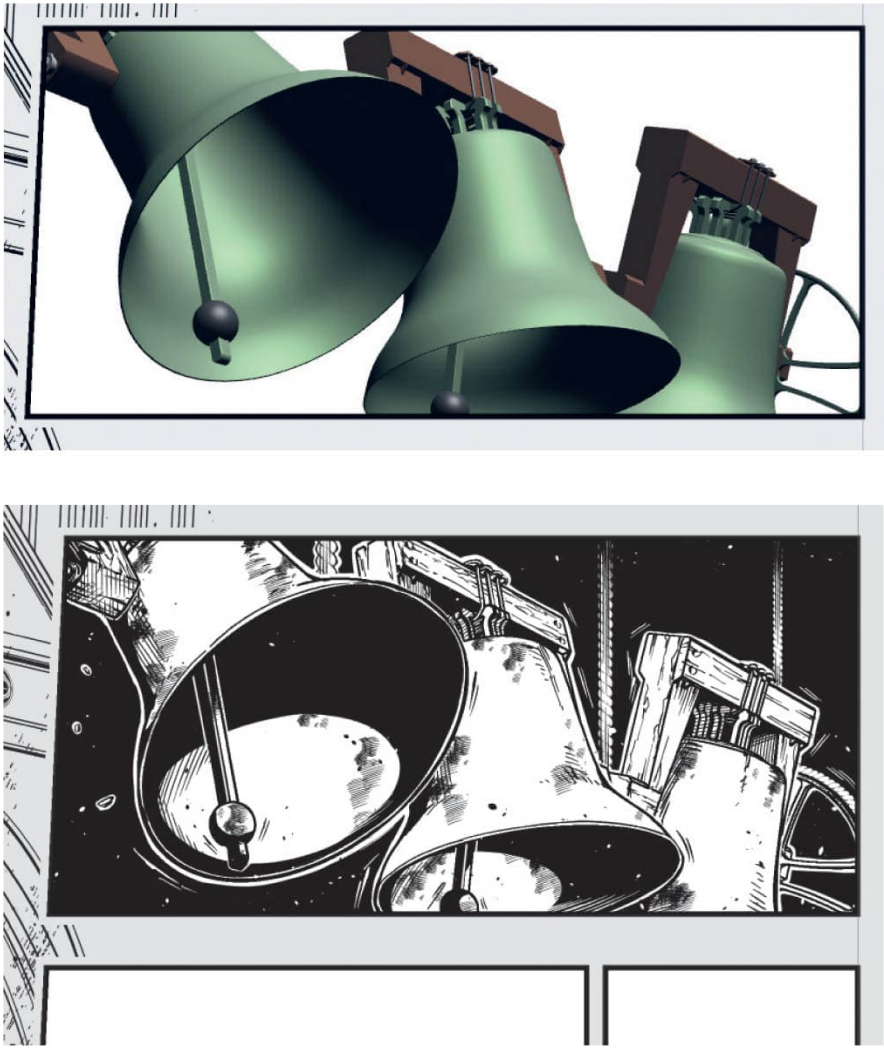
Grimmheim, Volume 1, *Kristina Andabak*

3D ASSETS
BY KRISTINA ANDABAK

When it comes to drawing complex objects like cars, weapons, or complicated buildings, you can easily spend hours trying to locate the right references, not to mention setting up the illustration itself and making sure things are accurate or positioned correctly. To help speed up this process, I often rely on 3D models, typically from the Clip Studio asset library or from 3D Warehouse. Of course, there's no guarantee that the model I need even exists, but most of the time there's something close enough to get the job done. It's also important to note that most models cost some form of money or software-specific currency to download, so using 3D models may not be a viable tool for everyone.

Personally, my favorite models come from Clip Studio, primarily because of the ease of accessing them from the asset library, but also because of the range of assets available; likewise, I'm able to create linework from these models, which greatly speeds up my process to focus on characters and other more important details.

We tend to use Clip Studio exclusively, and all of these assets came from the Clip Studio asset library. On occasion, SketchUp models may work, or other third-party files, if Clip Studio doesn't have what is needed for a particular scene.



Grimmheim, Volume 1, *Kristina Andabak*

USING 3D ASSETS CORRECTLY
BY KRISTINA ANDABAK

While 3D assets can be a massive time saver and provide drawing accuracy, using them incorrectly can quickly do more harm than good for your art. Case in point: The images below show two versions of the same scene in chapter 1 of *Soul Beat, Volume 1*, but one is clearly more effective than the other, right?

That's because a "less is more" approach was taken, and the train in the 2023 version was repositioned to be more visually compelling. Try to limit the number of 3D objects you have in the scene so you don't mess up your perspective or overwhelm the image with competing shapes. The second image works better because only two or three assets were used (the train, the signal, and a fence), while the rest was drawn with brushes and tones. Likewise, the second image does a better job of giving the train "character" by showing it "in motion"; it's turning toward the camera, rather than sitting flatly on the page like in the first example. This positioning also helped inform where other features could be placed to provide the best layout possible.

Of course, experience plays a big role in setting a scene correctly. There are at least six years difference between the creation of these two images, which goes to show that practice and studying professional manga can make a world of difference for your improvement.

WELL, IT'S JUST A FUN IDEA TO THINK ABOUT... I BELIEVE OUR ACTIONS SPEAK LOUDER THAN WORDS, ANYWAY.
HEY... I PLANNED ON GRABBING A BITE TO EAT ONCE I GOT BACK TO FAIRHAVEN.. I KNOW A GUY WHO'S GOT THE BEST DINER IN TOWN!
CLATTA
CLATTA
CLATTA

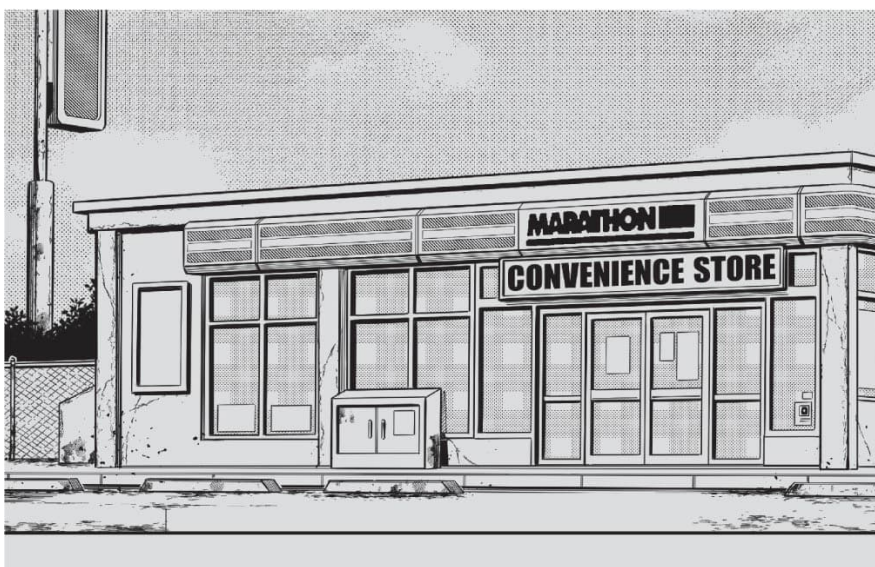
ANYWAY... WHAT DID YOU WANT TO SEE ME FOR, BEN?
WELL, YOU'RE RIGHT ABOUT ONE THING, DANTE... I DO HAVE A FAVOR TO ASK OF YOU.
OH YEAH? AND WHAT'S THAT?
IT'S... SOMETHING I'D RATHER TALK ABOUT IN PRIVATE.

Soul Beat, Volume 1, *Morganne Walker*

CREATING A COMPLETED BACKGROUND USING 3D ASSETS
BY MORGANNE WALKER

In chapter 12 of *Soul Beat, Volume 1*, there's a brief scene at a Chicago gas station. While I could have spent time developing this image from scratch, I opted to use a 3D model instead, which has all the details and proportions already established. Fortunately, I was able to locate one in Clip Studio's asset library that I liked; on the flip side, it's a bit expensive compared to other models . . . but there's always a chance to use this same asset in the future.

Once it's downloaded, I bring it into the drawing space and, using the manipulation tools, I adjust it within the panel to get the desired perspective. Using the "Convert to lines" command, I'm able to get quick lines which I can use for the final drawing. After doing some touch ups and adding additional details, such as building logos, tones, parking lot objects, and a sky pattern, the full background is completed!



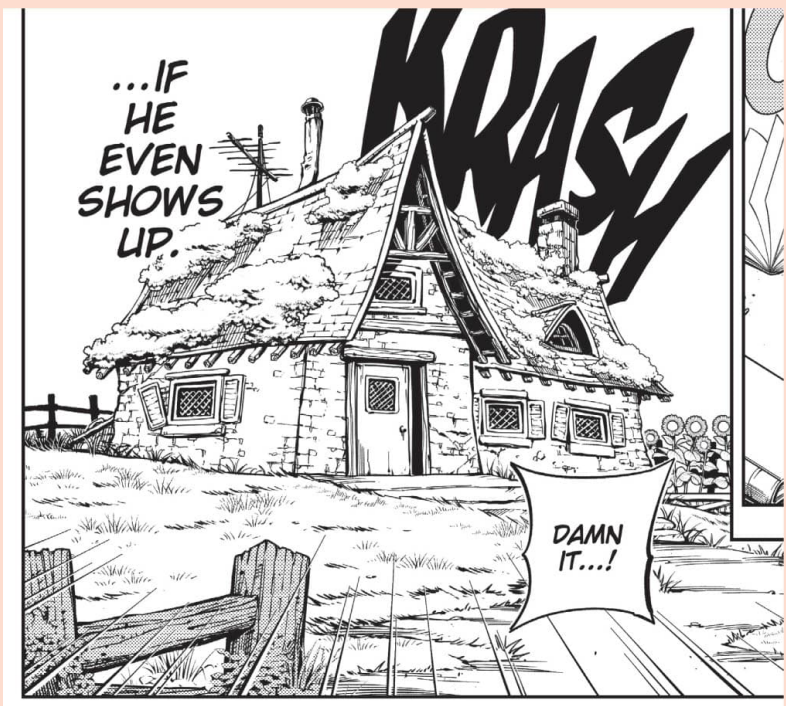
Consider using digital asset libraries that help create realistic environments like this 3D model from Clip Studio Paint. Before computers, many artists would take photos of buildings and architecture to use as background inspiration.

EXAMPLE PROCESSES OF CREATING BACKGROUNDS

Example 1: Ben Smith's home

Chapter 11 of *Soul Beat, Volume 1* is the first time we see the home of Dante's friend and mentor, Ben Smith. Given Ben's profession as a gravekeeper and his ascetic lifestyle following a literally hellish near-death experience, I wanted his home to feel cozy, modest, and a bit unrefined. As such, I decided to create an original design rather than waste time looking for the right model or photo to trace; I did use plenty of references to develop the design, of course.

I start with thumbnail sketches to get the general shapes and perspective I want, then translate that into Clip Studio by sketching the final layout and building design. Keeping in mind the location of speech balloons, sound effects, and maintaining proper foreground/middle ground/background balance, the final image comes together.



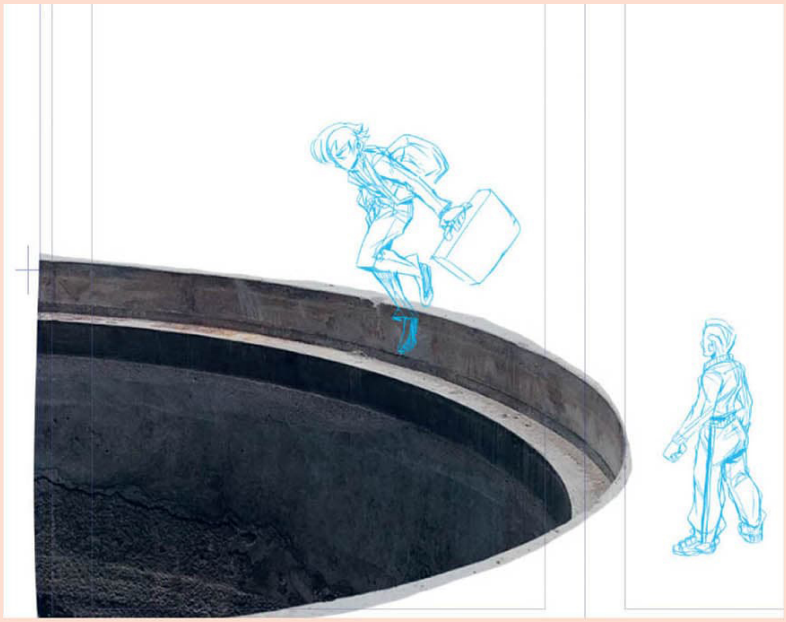
Your character's environment can be as unique as their costume design. Soul Beat, Volume 1, *Morganne Walker*

Example 2: Leap into the Pit

The end of *Soul Beat, Volume 1* starts with a dynamic shot of Virgil jumping into a pit to investigate the results of Dante's battle with

Maddock. This was a large panel (partly a double-page spread), so there were tons of details that needed to be included; likewise, there are complex objects in the scene, such as construction equipment and industrial piping, so many 3D assets were used to save time and ensure the background was accurate at a glance (see snips below).

The process is about the same as any other: Start with a sketch or rough outline, develop further with character sketches and reference images to trace, then, using 3D assets, brushes, and analog drawing techniques like hatching, the line art begins to develop; finally, I add tones and sound effects, then it's done!



Every panel is a challenge, part 2! This complex Soul Beat, Volume 1 *scene finds Dante falling from a frightening height and features both freehand imagination and asset tools to get the background just right.* Soul Beat, Volume 1, *Morganne Walker*

LEAP
...?!

Every panel is a challenge! This subtle scene of a jumping character from Soul Beat, Volume 1 *took time to create the proper angle*. Soul Beat, Volume 1, *Morganne Walker*

Example 3: Dante's Freefall

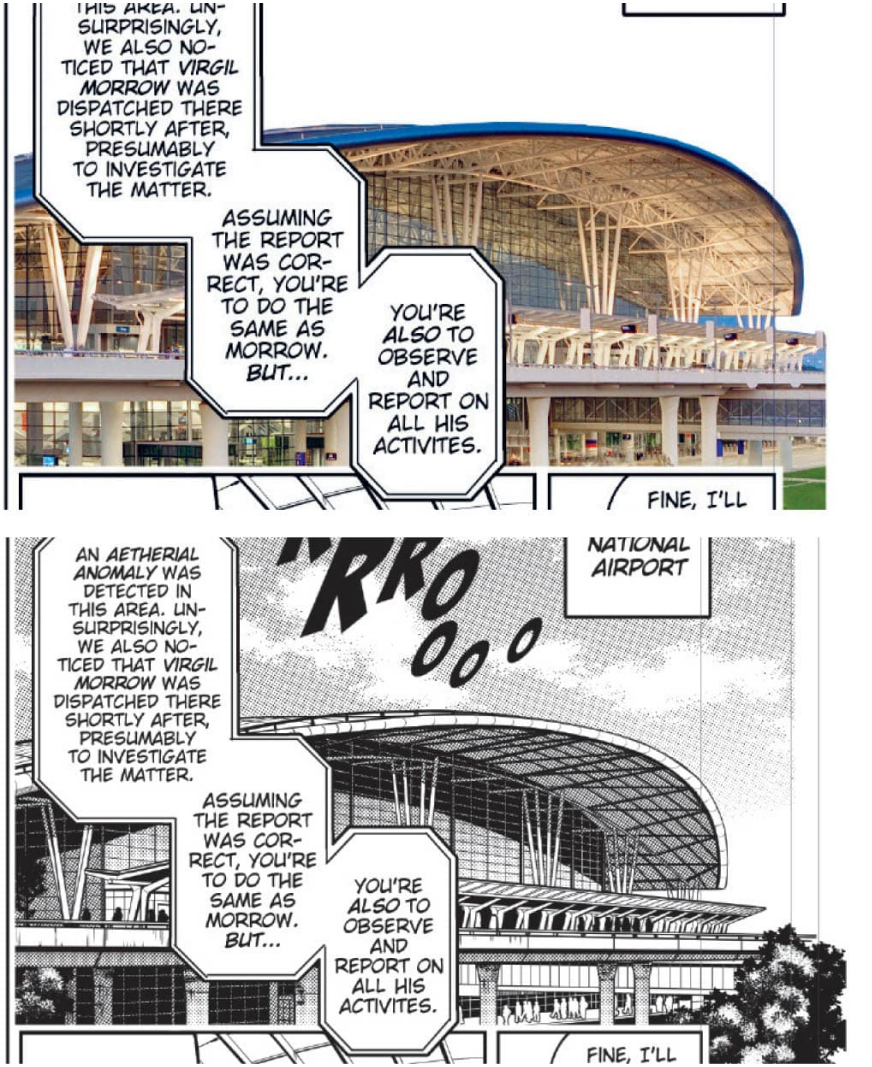
Probably one of the most complex and time-consuming backgrounds, this full-page image took roughly a week of spare time to complete. Not only did it require lots of detail, but the extreme "fisheye lens" perspective was not something I tried before, so it made it difficult to position Dante and the cityscape below him.

The best way to start a piece like this was to establish Dante's orientation inside the panel so I could ink him; from there, I could determine the placement and scale of the landscape below him. I then filled in the spherical area with black, making sure the top included

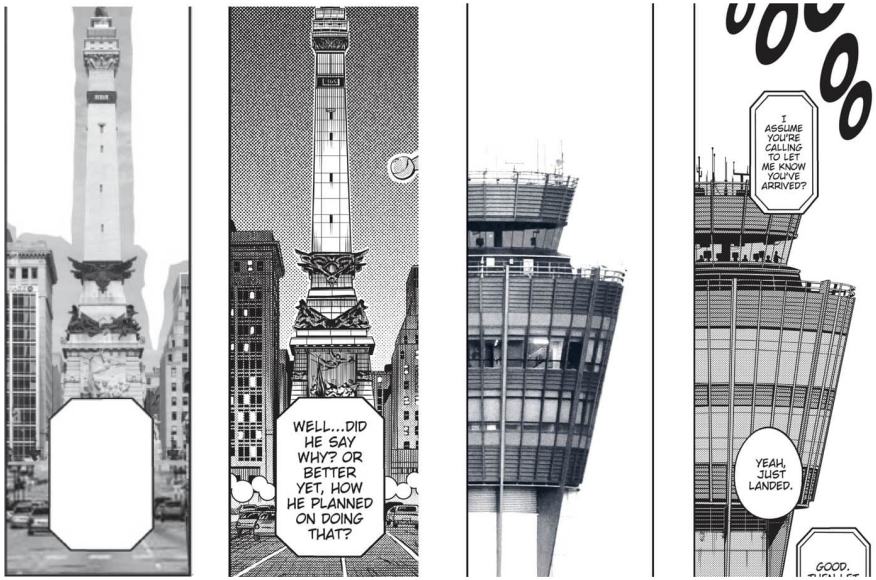
shapes for faraway buildings along the horizon line. Using multiple brushes and photos (desaturated and manipulated to look like line art), I filled out details such as buildings and vegetation, making sure to provide enough texture for people to understand the landscape but not compete with Dante, who is the central focus. For the explosion below Dante, I used additional brushes to create a tower of smoke and flames to fill in the remaining gap in the background. Lastly, I made adjustments to Dante's wardrobe, and added text, speech balloons and tones to complete the image.

PHOTO TRACING, PHOTO BASHING, AND PHOTO MANIPULATION
BY MORGANNE WALKER

I'm not opposed or embarrassed to admit that I use photos not only as reference, but as a direct source of material to create line work in my manga; in fact, many professional mangaka also use photos, depending on the circumstance and if they want a more photorealistic style. There are a few tricks to consider for this particular technique; one is desaturating the image, then either adjusting contrast and brightness of the image, or using "binarization" to get more accurate separation of light tones and dark tones. If these manipulations don't work, simply tracing the image can be effective enough, assuming you still use perspective rulers and exercise artistic license by filing out missing details. The most important thing is to experiment with these methods and see what works best for you (see examples below).



Indianapolis airport, Indiana photo reference, and illustrated panel from the not-yet-published Soul Beat, Volume 2 *by Morganne Walker*


WELL...DID HE SAY WHY? OR BETTER YET, HOW HE PLANNED ON DOING THAT?
I ASSUME YOU'RE CALLING TO LET ME KNOW YOU'VE ARRIVED?
YEAH, JUST LANDED.
GOOD.

Monument Circle, downtown Indianapolis photo reference, and the illustration from Soul Beat, Volume 2 *by Morganne Walker*

USING VEGETATION AND OBJECTS
BY MORGANNE WALKER

Vegetation and groundcover elements like plants are a great way to fill out background space and establish the setting of your scene. This can be a tedious exercise, though, so using brushes are greatly encouraged unless you have talented assistants to do it for you. It's also important to make sure these features do not overwhelm the image, or compete with the characters. I like to leave some breathing room, and reduce the density of lines around characters so they stand out better; increasing detail density around the edges also provides a good "framing" effect.

WELL, OF COURSE HE IS...THOSE KINDS OF THINGS ARE THE FUNDAMENTALS IN BOXING.
YOU DON'T LIKE THEM THOUGH?
NO WAY, THEY'RE STUPID! HOW IS POSTURE AND THE WAY I MOVE MY LEGS GONNA HELP ME KNOCK SOMEONE OUT?
I JUST WANT TO LEARN COOL THINGS THAT WILL ACTUALLY BE USEFUL... LIKE UPPERCUTS AND JABS!
NOT ALL FIGHTS ARE DETERMINED BY STRENGTH ALONE, KID. SOMETIMES SPEED, DEFENSE AND A GOOD STRATEGY ARE WHAT YOU NEED TO WIN.
WHATEVER...

Work-in-progress page from the not-yet-published Soul Beat, Volume 2

BEEP BEEP
...!!
HMM? DAMN, THAT FIGHT WENT LONGER THAN I THOUGHT.
I BETTER GET GOING, OR I'LL BE LATE TO PRACTICE ...
YOU'RE STILL DOING THE BOXING THING?
I THOUGHT YOU WERE PLANNING TO "RETIRE" ...
I AM. I JUST... HAVEN'T FIGURED OUT THE RIGHT TIME TO DO IT, YET.

Work-in-progress page from the not-yet-published Soul Beat, Volume 2, *Morganne Walker*

LEARN ABOUT BACKGROUNDS AND CAMERA ANGLES & HOW THEY AFFECT PAGE LAYOUTS.

THOUGHTS ON LETTERING
WITH EVAN HAYDEN AND COCO

The craft of lettering is every bit as precise and requiring of human talent as the illustrations you look at on a page. While most new or indie manga creators will typeset their own work, most publishers work with freelance professionals from around the world to work on their manga titles.

We wanted to speak to two such artists about the craft and tips for those wishing to launch their own series.

Corinna G. Cornett ("Coco") has worked on titles in the manga, webtoon, and graphic novel categories.

Evan Hayden has worked for a number of manga publishers, including Saturday AM, with titles like Massively Multiplayer World of Ghosts and Hammer.

What software do you mainly use?

Coco:
Software applications I mostly use are Adobe Photoshop, Adobe InDesign, and Clip Studio Paint.

Are there free options for lettering software that you'd recommend?

Coco:
Some free apps I recommend are MediBang Paint or JUMP Paint. They're more designed from creating manga/comics from scratch, but they both have a good selection of fonts to manipulate.

Could you tell us a bit about fonts and font licenses?

Coco:
When I'm looking for a free open source for commercial use font, I first check FontSquirrel.com.

Evan Hayden:
Might not be bad to add Adobe Fonts (which comes with Adobe Creative Cloud) to this, and maybe Monotype. I use Adobe Fonts sometimes and have gotten some good typefaces from it. As for Monotype, I haven't used it personally, but several people at one of my clients do, and they seem to like it.

What are some lettering things to watch out for?

Evan Hayden:
I'd mention when laying out the InDesign doc to make sure the art goes all the way into the bleed so that you don't have unfinished art showing up on the edges of splash pages. Maybe this is covered in a different area, since it's more about setting up a layout than lettering, but just wanted to mention it.

Natural-reading breakups of lines and words in a word balloon . . . It's always best to avoid hyphenating a word unless you have to, and if you do, it doesn't hurt to check online to see how a specific word is meant to be broken up if you're not sure. (hyphenation24.com is my preferred one, or for multilingual hyphenation help, ushuaia.pl). Also, pay attention to the flow of the sentences. It is better to do a line break at a comma or period if possible. Just read it to yourself within a sentence and see what would be natural.

What are some differences that you notice in lettering for Western comics and manga?

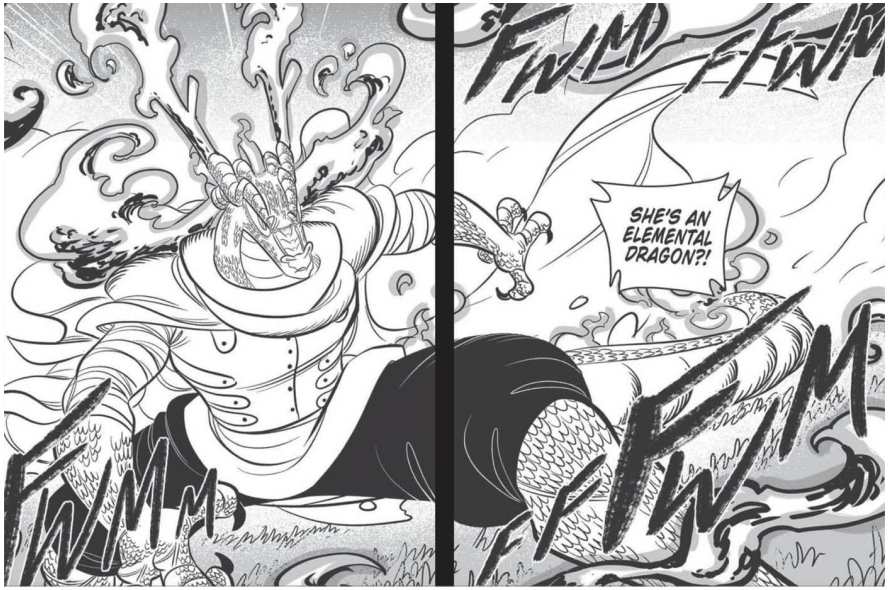
Coco:
I definitely feel less restrained when I letter a Western style comic versus manga. For manga, I've only ever been given some free rein on SFX font choice or stylizing the SFX on a handful of titles. Korean and Chinese webtoons publishers allow letterers to stylize SFX fonts, which makes working those projects really fun creatively.

Could you tell us about the different types of "non-dialogue"?

Coco:
Non-dialogue for the projects I've worked would include any replacement of signs, pamphlets, bulletin boards, menus, etc. in the scene or background.

Should SFX be hand-drawn or typed out?

Coco:
I like both. There are a lot of instances where I wish I would've be allowed to hand letter, but there are other instances where I wish I was allowed to use a font I found that would be perfect for a project.



Lettered page example by Evan Hayden for Hammer, Volume 3, *JeyOdin*

Is there anything else you think some beginners might find helpful for lettering?

Coco:
Follow social media accounts of other professionals and publishers. Read Nate Piekos's book *The Essential Guide to Comic Book Lettering*.

Some tips I give:

- Know your syllables, prefixes, and suffixes because you can't always trust the application to hyphenate correctly.
- Text in bubbles should ideally make a diamond shape.
- Practice makes perfect. Like any other skill, you lose it when you don't use it.
- Doodle, sketch, draw, etc. to help keep your mind creative.
- Never stop learning new tricks or tools

Evan Hayden:
There's nothing wrong with an exclamation point, question mark, interrobang (?!), or even an ellipsis hanging out below a body of text. Here's a good example:

WHAT
ARE YOU

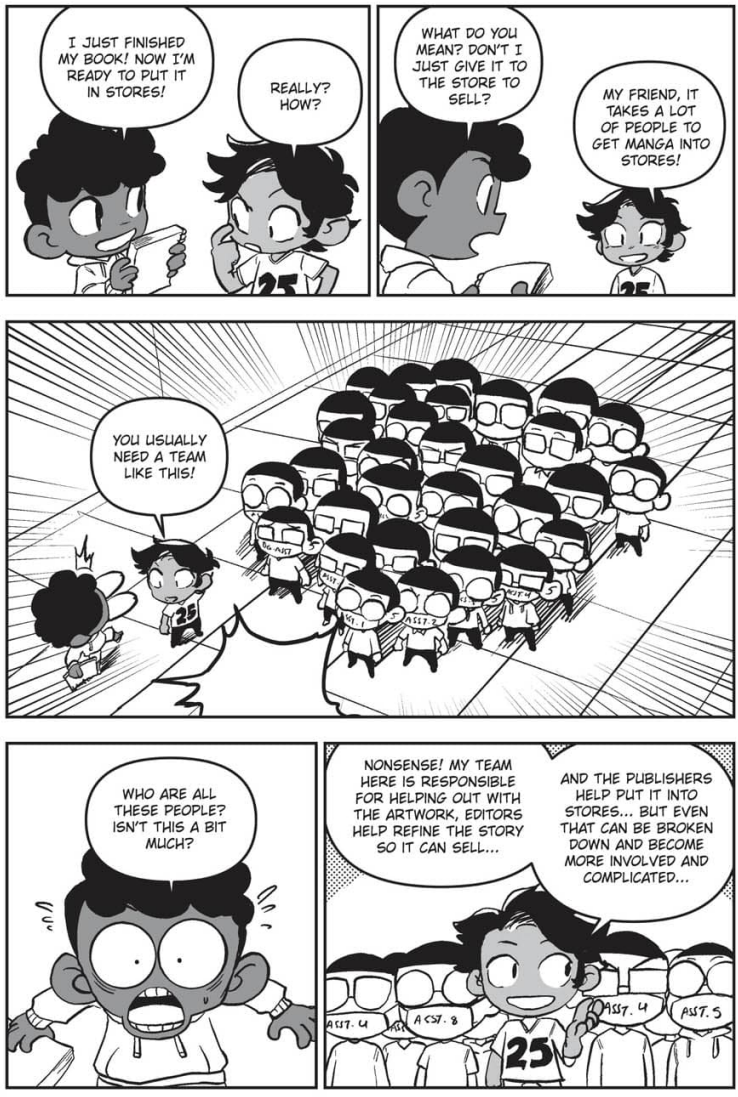
TALKING
ABOUT?!

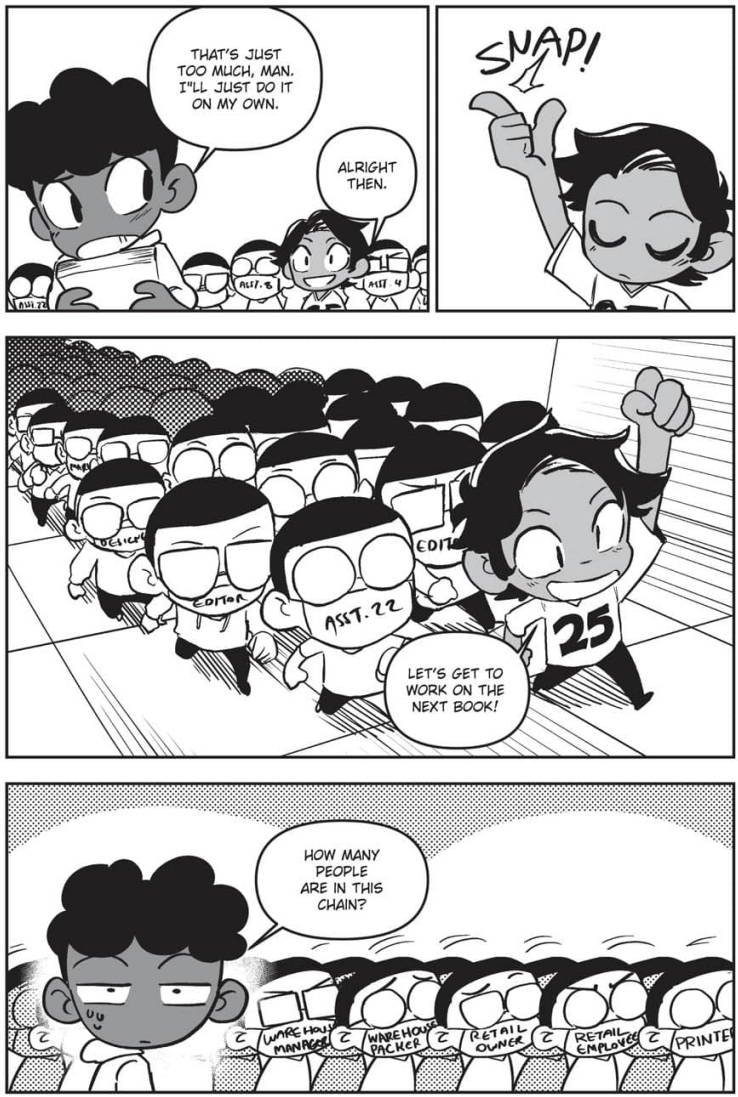
or

WHAT
ARE YOU
TALKING
ABOUT
?!

Putting that “?!” at the bottom or next to “about” both look good. Sometimes the shape of the balloon necessitates the latter.

In the next chapter, we discuss how to publish and distribute your manga!


I JUST FINISHED MY BOOK! NOW I'M READY TO PUT IT IN STORES!
REALLY? HOW?
WHAT DO YOU MEAN? DON'T I JUST GIVE IT TO THE STORE TO SELL?
MY FRIEND, IT TAKES A LOT OF PEOPLE TO GET MANGA INTO STORES!
YOU USUALLY NEED A TEAM LIKE THIS!
WHO ARE ALL THESE PEOPLE? ISN'T THIS A BIT MUCH?
NONSENSE! MY TEAM HERE IS RESPONSIBLE FOR HELPING OUT WITH THE ARTWORK, EDITORS HELP REFINE THE STORY SO IT CAN SELL...
AND THE PUBLISHERS HELP PUT IT INTO STORES... BUT EVEN THAT CAN BE BROKEN DOWN AND BECOME MORE INVOLVED AND COMPLICATED...
ASST. 4
ASST. 5


THAT'S JUST TOO MUCH, MAN. I"LL JUST DO IT ON MY OWN.
ALRIGHT THEN.
ASST. 22
ASST. 8
ASST 4
SNAP!
EDITOR
ASST. 22
25
LET'S GET TO WORK ON THE NEXT BOOK!
HOW MANY PEOPLE ARE IN THIS CHAIN?
WAREHOUSE MANAGER
WAREHOUSE PACKER
RETAIL OWNER
RETAIL EMPLOYEE
PRINTER

CHAPTER
PUBLISHING & DISTRIBUTION

06

BRINGING YOUR STORY INTO THE REAL WORLD!

You've spent countless hours crafting your manga, from character designs and thrilling plot twists to perfecting every panel layout.

Now, it's time to share your creation with the world!

But how do you take your work from the drawing board to the hands of eager readers?

First of all, it's never been easier—or as inexpensive—to publish your work to a large audience than it is today. Understanding the ins and outs of publishing and distribution is the final key to realizing your dream of becoming a published manga artist.

In this section, we guide you through the process of getting your manga out there, whether you're looking at traditional publishing houses, digital platforms, or self-publishing options, as well as showing the pros and cons of each.

Publishing now consists of multiple avenues, including self-publishing (print or digital), crowdfunding, digital platforms, or going through a major publisher (again, print or digital). No matter the path you choose, this section will equip you with the knowledge and strategies to take your manga from your sketchbook and out to the world. The journey from creator to published author is challenging but immensely rewarding.

Dreams do come true! The joy of seeing your books on a store shelf is incomparable.

PUBLISHING

SELF-PUBLISHING (PRINT OR DIGITAL)

Pros

1. **Creative Control:**
   Full ownership of the creative process, from storytelling to artwork, formatting, and marketing decisions, means you can work at your own pace and make your own vision come to life without restrictions.

2. **Higher Profit Margin:**
   You retain the bulk of the profits. There are no publishing houses or agents to split the revenue with. Note: You *will* accrue costs and fees no matter which direction you take, including digitally via platforms like WEBTOON, Patreon, or even self-printing.

3. **Flexibility and Speed:**
   You can publish on your own timeline. There's no need to wait for approval or adhere to a publishing schedule, allowing for quicker releases.

4. **Direct Audience Connection:**
   By self-publishing, you can build a closer, more personal relationship with your audience through social media or crowdfunding platforms like Kickstarter or Patreon. Feedback is immediate, and fans can support you directly.

5. **Potential Global Reach:**
   With platforms like Amazon KDP, WEBTOON Canvas, Manga Plus, or Globalcomix, you can reach a worldwide audience quickly without being confined to specific regions or demographics.

Ask for the sell. Always make sure your comic convention booths show your work clearly for new customers.

Cons

1. **Initial Costs:**
   The cost of printing, marketing, distribution, and other logistical factors are on you. If you need professional help with editing, art, or marketing, those costs can add up.

2. **Marketing and Promotion:**
   You have to handle all marketing, promotion, and distribution. Without a publisher's backing, getting noticed among the countless other self-proclaimed works can feel overwhelming.

3. **Lack of Professional Guidance:**
   There's no editorial or publishing house to offer guidance on improving your work, which can result in a longer learning curve for creating professional-level content.

4. **Less Creative Time:**
   Self-publishing requires not only creating the comic but also managing all aspects of the business, from marketing to distribution. This can detract from time spent creating new content.

5. **Restricted Reach:**
   Self-publishing, especially in print form, without a large distribution company will make getting your books into stores,

comic shops, and even online platforms much more difficult.

PROFITS

Unfortunately, social media can be full of misinformation. For example, two things rarely discussed are profit and sales. Self-publishing or traditional publishing will both require out of pocket expenses, including travel, promotional items, and art supplies. These can affect the amount of money you actually make per page or per project. As a result, sales are critical. Promoting your work is essential, as your profit improves based on selling more units. Remember: A 100% profit of $0.00 is still $0.00.

TRADITIONAL PUBLISHING

Pros

1. **Industry Support and Resources:**
   You gain access to professional editors, marketing teams, distribution networks, and other resources that can enhance the quality of your work and its reach.

2. **Wider Distribution:**
   Publishers have established relationships with stores, international publishers (for foreign rights), and distributors, ensuring a broader reach for your comic in both digital and physical formats.

3. **Reputation and Prestige:**
   Being published by a traditional publisher gives your comic/manga more legitimacy. It can open doors for awards, media coverage, and potential adaptation deals (e.g., TV or movie rights).

4. **Less Financial Risk:**
   Most (not all) traditional publishers will cover the costs of your creative time, printing, marketing, and distribution, meaning you don't need to invest your own money upfront.

5. **Focus on Creation:**
   You can concentrate more on the creative process while the publisher handles much of the logistical and business-related aspects, like marketing and distribution.

Saturday AM's Henshin! creator Bon Idle regularly presents all his work at shows in the UK.

Cons

1. **Less Creative Control:**
   You need to make compromises on the content, style, or pacing of your comic/manga to meet the publisher's demands or align with market trends.

2. **Lower Profit Margins:**
   Traditional publishers take a cut of the sales revenue, and you may only receive a small percentage of profits after advances and expenses are recouped. This is largely negotiable, but consider that a book publisher employs important team members who aid in the editing, design, production, distribution and selling of your manga. Where it may just be you creating it, there are dozens of individuals who will assist in getting into stores and libraries worldwide.

3. **Longer Process:**
   The process of getting accepted by a publisher can be slow. After acceptance, it can take months or even years before your comic is officially published.

4. **Rejection and Gatekeeping:**
   The barrier to entry is higher, and getting accepted by a traditional publisher can be challenging due to stiff competition. Many creators face numerous rejections before finding success.

5. **Risk of Contractual Limitations:**
   Some publishers may wish to acquire rights to your work, which can limit your ability to publish your comic or manga in other forms (i.e., digital-only, international versions, and merchandising opportunities).

COMIC SHOP OWNERS ARE NORMAL, RIGHT?

Trust us, most comic book and manga stores are run by fun if not quirky business people who fans, first and foremost! Alan Gill has been in the business for over thirty years and has been a Ringo Award Judge, is the founder of NC Comicon, and is the owner of Ultimate Comics, one of the biggest comic book store chains in the Southeast US.

What trends are happening in comic shops?

Manga and YA GN are more than an add-on, they're just part of our business now. We're ordering twenty, thirty copies of releases instead of the old days where it would just be a single copy or two. Now we have people actively coming in looking for those releases.

Do movies and streaming affect sales?

For the superhero-related stuff, most of the hype comes before the movie release. So Marvel and DC get their trade paperbacks back in print before the movie hits. We normally see a drop off after that if people feel the movie doesn't live up to the expectation. Manga is different. They watch and then get books to continue the story—so it does affect sales if the anime is popular.

Any advice for new creators?

Getting your comic into a store is not hard. You can try big distribution companies or you can come in and show your work to the store owner and manager, and if they like it they may buy or even let you place a few copies there! That said, don't assume that your local comic book shop is able to do lots of promotion for you. Whether it's YouTube shows, social media, interactions, going to comicons, or local art shows, you gotta get yourself out there! There's not enough hours in the day or a bandwidth for the stores to do that, no matter how good you are. They want you to succeed but they don't know you yet and everything has to make financial sense. So, get involved in building a fanbase first and foremost because getting into a shop is the easy part—having your manga stay in stores is the harder part.

Trust us—Ultimate Comics's Alan is a fun, knowledgeable leader.

PRINTING

Whether you publish your work directly or join with a bigger publisher, getting your book printed is a required expense. For traditional publishers, you may have access to bigger printers internationally and thus will be able to choose from unique cover stock, custom sizes, and better paper options.

If you self-publish and choose to print via a service like Kindle Direct Print, your book will be on the biggest e-commerce store in the world, Amazon, and will provide the added benefit of Kindle e-book distribution. That said, you will not have the same amount of options for your book's design and paper options.

Either way, you will have to market the books, as the same opportunities to self-publish exist for everyone, and this makes discovery harder for all manga.

TRADE DRESS

A basic rule for any creator: Consumers respond to the cover! So make sure your spine has a legible logo (not too fancy) just in case your book is shown with its spine facing outward—otherwise, your front cover should feature a dynamic image, and your creator name must be clearly visible (as some retailers will stock by name of author).

Looks matter! Even for our first selfpublished manga, we made use of industry standard trade dress to ensure if our books were in stores, they would look like they belonged.

PRINTING YOUR MANGA

People like Rod may become your best friend during the manga-making process. Besides creatives, supply chain companies will be important to your success.

While many artists are now producing work digitally for faster reach, the magic of printed books and the stores that sell them is never going to go out of style! So, let's talk about the structure of printing your manga.

Rumonda "Rod" Smith is Executive Vice President and General Manager of Perfect Image Printing.

Smith is a veteran of the commercial printing and vertical technology consulting industries, with more than thirty years of management, IT, and client service expertise.

Is it better to print internationally or the west?

It depends. In my opinion, internationally is usually only desirable at mega-quantities (500,000 and higher) and if you have someone on the ground there who can coordinate the production and provide customer service. Who do you call if you're not happy about quality or have a change? Also, consider timelines and budget.

For example, shipping to the US (in particular) isn't cheap and if you need it quickly, it will be very costly for air freight. Lots of books

(depending on the book's dimensions and page count) on a pallet can weigh in excess of 1,000 pounds (454 kg).

Likewise, printing options drastically reduce when you consider a major holiday like Chinese New Year (i.e., at the end of January and runs for two weeks).

I'm self-printing—are digital printing presses better than traditional printing presses?

As for digital versus traditional, again there are many considerations, including quantity, finishing requirements, and variable data. The best way to look at offset (traditional printing) is that it uses aluminum plates, takes a bit longer to set up the printing process, and offers options including printing covers with embossing, foil stamping, and spot finish. Note: Offset printing is cheaper internationally at higher quantities.

Digital printing may be a bit faster to produce small quantities, as well as a tad cheaper. That said, inline finishing processes vary from device to device, so working with your print provider is essential to maximize the type of book you can produce. Likewise, the options for the physical size of your book may be limited.

It ultimately will come down to your timeframe as well as your budget. Your best choice will be to look at full service printers and get an estimate where you can actually consider all of your options.

PRINTING COSTS

The larger the dimensions of the book (known as the trim size), the more pages, and color printing will increase the cost of printing.

LEARN MORE ABOUT TIPS AND TRICKS FOR PRINTING AND DISTRIBUTION.

DISTRIBUTION

Book distributors play a crucial role in the comic book industry by acting as middlemen between publishers and retailers. Here's what they typically do:

1. **Get your manga into stores:**
   Every product you see in a store from digital to physical, independent bookstores to giant chain stores work with distributors. Big or small, you'll need distribution to manage getting your books into the stores.

2. **Take orders and payments:**
   Managing inventory and getting sales is not easy and so distributors will greatly reduce any creator's stress by managing this process via hugely useful order platforms like the Diamond's *PREVIEWS* catalog.

3. **Store your manga:**
   Before your manga ends up in stores it must be stored somewhere and warehousing is one of the features your distributor will provide. Keep in mind, self-publishers will not only need to get their own warehousing but likewise, be involved in packaging and shipping material for each retailer or customer order.

4. **Returns handling:**
   If sales are important then returns are crucial as they directly affect profits and royalties. A distributor helps with this.

5. **Merchandise Development Funds and Cooperative Marketing:**
   Marketing is always essential and takes on many facets from merchandise development funds to cooperative marketing, which both involve instore support for your books. These can include header cards for endcaps, promotional tie-ins or gift with purchase, Free Comic Book Day, and shelf talkers.

FOREIGN RIGHTS

There are several misconceptions about getting your manga into other countries beyond the one you may reside in. Distribution is a part of it, but it may often involve another publisher who resides in the nation you wish to have your book sold in. They will make a request and if you're in a traditional publisher relationship, you may not know when

or if such a deal is finalized.

Some publishers have a department called coeditions or foreign rights and they manage these from every country they have the rights to. It's a long process and does not happen overnight. Furthermore, if your book does get picked up for foreign rights or distribution, you may not know when it's releasing as the process is based on the foreign rights holder's schedule and not on yours.

France is the second largest market for manga in the world and while it's home to amazing manga like Radiant, it's not been an easy road for many of their original manga to make it to America or Japan. Even Saturday AM, despite having manga sold in over forty countries and with creators from over twelve countries, only has a few foreign language editions (aside from English) for our titles.

Ask for updates and be patient.

Finally, the money collected for these rights can be a part of your existing distribution agreement and thus would go toward your advance.

Saturday AM goes global. Apple Black's Turkish translation has a slightly different look and title.

LICENSING

Another common misconception is that getting an anime is the solution to getting stronger manga sales.

No doubt, anime drives incremental manga sales in most countries.

But, getting an anime is incredibly complicated.

Production of a single episode of an anime can cost upwards of $250,000.

And like getting a traditional book publisher to want to publish your manga, an anime studio doesn't make an anime just because a creator wants them to.

Ultimately, sales and proof of consumer interest will drive a company to want to invest in your manga.

This can be achieved via:

- Strong social media following
- Proven sales of existing products (books, shirts, prints, etc.)
- A proven concept with character designs that stand out

Licensing is the key. While companies that are interested will reach out to you, it's favorable to have an agent assist with fielding offers and negotiations.

An agent can command anywhere from 10 percent to 35 percent of your deal, but they'll handle managing creative assets, marketing requirements, communications, legal, and trade show attendance, which leaves you time to continue producing your manga!

From the start, Saturday AM focused on building mainstream characters and concepts that we felt could succeed on a variety of products. That made it easier to license our brand for other media.

SO YOU WANT TO MAKE AN ANIME?

The holy grail for most fans and new artists alike is to see an anime of their manga made. This is so much harder than they realize and for all of the advances that have been made with globally diverse manga—the anime (made by a Japanese studio for a Japanese audience as well as a global one) has proven to be difficult. But that may be about to change.

We spoke with Jerome Mazandarani on the popularity of anime and the potential for getting an anime on the air for non-Japanese creators. Jerome is a professional with eighteen years of experience in anime, including being the former managing director of the UK's largest anime distributor, Manga Entertainment, and having worked on Cannon Busters for LeSean Thomas and Netflix.

Anime is the current preferred category of young consumers, especially those who enjoy streaming services. From the production standpoint—is Japanese anime any different from Western animation?

Yes, Japanese anime is very different from Western animation. Well! It used to be, but with the advent of streaming, global audiences have received a crash course in the joys of sophisticated genre storytelling in animation for adults.

Jerome may be a Brit, but he loves his trips to Southern California.

The influential work Akira *(1988) lead to the birth of one of anime's most popular brands, Manga Entertainment, which is based in the UK.*

Series like *Arcane* and *Blue Eye Samurai* are jaw-droppingly gorgeous and staggering works of art that in their own ways have revolutionized episodic animation production in the West. *Invincible* completely flips the script on American superhero storytelling, and it reclaims the Nietzschean "Superman mythos" from the Saiyans. *Scavengers Reign* is the first deep scifi animated series produced in the US. *Hazbin Hotel* is one of the most successful YouTube original web animations ever produced, and its long-form Amazon exclusive series is a leader for openly queer representation in the medium. All of these "Western" animations for adults are made by animators who love anime, but what they show us is that there is a place for many of us to contribute to our local industry rather than dreaming of working ourselves to death in a Tokyo sweatshop for a pittance.

Anime is different from these forms of Western adult genre animation because of the way it is written. The average anime series is now twelve to thirteen half-hour TV episodes long, whereas most of the above series are premium limited series of between six and nine episodes max.

You were a big part of the Cannon Busters anime on Netflix. Was this the first time an independent comic received an anime from a Japanese studio? How did this deal come together?

There were around a dozen executive producers on Cannon Busters. Sadly! I was the one who controlled the budget and had to guarantee we delivered the finished series on the date we promised, which meant I was deeply unpopular. However! Before I or any of the other EPs came on board there was LeSean Thomas, who single-handedly began the work of adapting his comic into an anime, attaching Japanese creative talent and the Tokyo-based studio Satelight, and launching one of the most successful animation Kickstarter campaigns up to the point of raising the funds to self-finance an eight-minute-long pilot episode. This was in 2016 and I met LeSean in July of that year during Anime Expo in Los Angeles. I was representing the company I worked for, Manga Entertainment (UK), at the time. We offered to provide gap-financing to LeSean to complete the pilot when it extended its run time to twelve minutes in exchange for the exclusive right to manage sales and distribution of the long-form series rights.

The completed pilot is one of the most beautiful pieces of anime I have ever seen. It was stunning and it caught the entire industry's attention. We fielded co-production and distribution offers for a full-length series from notable companies including Viz Media, Roosterteeth, and Netflix, who we decided to partner with. The deal we struck was what is called a "negative pickup," which means a contract where a studio/distributor agrees to purchase a completed film or series from an independent producer for a fixed sum upon delivery. This meant that I had to go out and borrow the money against the Netflix deal to finance production (aka "cashflow the production") as well as find an international distribution partner to take on those rights and hopefully fill the financing gap we had.

I worked my butt off with the help of a fantastic team of people from Manga Entertainment, including our CFO, Kaushik Bhagat; CEO, Colin Lomax; production supervisor, Bob Thompson; and business and legal affairs consultant, Alan Rudoff. Don't forget! We were already very busy running a successful anime distribution company in the UK at the

time, and we had the day-to-day operations of Cannon Busters to manage on top. It was a grueling and stressful experience, but I am glad we did it. I feel very proud of Cannon Busters and what LeSean Thomas achieved with that series. It was a labor of love for all of us. It also put me off trying to make anime in Japan ever again.

LeSean Thomas's Cannon Busters is one of the more recent examples of diversity in anime.

By the way. I believe we were the second Netflix anime series (90 percent of the production and development was done entirely in Japan and in Japanese, so yes, it is an "anime") adapted from an independent comic. The first was Trese, a Filipino komik series written by Budjette Tan and illustrated by Kajo Baldisimo, and published by Alamat Comics.

Many young fans wish to make an anime one day based on their own manga title. How difficult is it to get projects financed and produced by major anime studios?

It's almost impossible. The truth is, very few non-Japanese manga ever get published in Japan, and if you ain't published, you ain't getting an anime adaptation of your work. The only gaijin mangaka I can think of is Tony Valente and his shonen title, Radiant, which was first published in his native France in 2013, has had nineteen volumes published in French up to November 2024.

It was picked up by Asukashinsha, a medium-sized Japanese publisher in 2015. So! Lesson number one would be to ensure that you have built up a large enough body of work before you pitch to overseas publishing partners. The twenty-four-episode anime series adaptation was produced by the production studio Lerche (Toilet-bound Hanako-kun) and aired on NHK, the national television broadcaster, between October 2018 and February 2020, and was streamed exclusively on Crunchyroll globally.

More recently we have seen a number of Korean manhwa, first published by WEBTOON in Japan before going into print as manga editions, and being adapted into anime series. Some of the most successful Korean WEBTOON anime include Solo Leveling, The God of High School, and Tower of God.

My advice to readers is to focus on developing and creating your manga first. Self-publish and develop your audience. Consider platforms like Patreon or Substack as ways to share your work and build an audience that is happy to support you. Use Instagram to market your manga to new readers and convert them into paying subscribers. Learn how to run your own business online. Sell merch directly to consumers. At least one person you know is already running their own e-commerce business. They can help you learn how to game the system to build an audience on socials, adopt services like Shopify, and create your own cottage content industry and brand. Also! Consider entering manga competitions to gain awareness from general readers and the local publishing business. Every win is incremental. This will be the most difficult and the most rewarding stage of your fledgling career. It is highly likely that it will also be the happiest stage of your career.

Let's say you've gotten to the stage where you have self-published your manga serialization and picked up the interest of a local publisher like Saturday AM. Let's manifest that and start to imagine where we go next

after publishing three to four volumes of our original manga. If you really want this manga adapted as a 100 percent Japanese anime, you need to get your work published in Japan, in Japanese.

You will need to consider localizing your work at your own expense in Japanese if you don't have webtoon publishers immediately knocking down your door. You will then also need to invest in local marketing to ensure readers will discover your new series.

Let's now pretend that you've miraculously found a decent-sized Japanese readership for your webtoon. Let's also pretend now that a local manga publisher discovers your work, sees the local audience size, and is convinced of its commercial potential. They publish your manga in Japan! Now you are published, just like Tony Valente ten years earlier. Local TV broadcasters and a few local streaming companies show interest. A production planning company like Slow Curve or Aniplex approaches you about optioning the manga and creating a production committee to adapt your work into an anime series. How does it get financed? The local, Japanese committee members will cover up to 60 percent of the production budget, but they'll need an overseas partner like Crunchyroll to jump on a co-producer to fill the 40 percent gap. You'd better hope the projected production budget is no greater than $300,000 per episode. Otherwise! Crunchyroll will likely not be interested.

Let's pretend that all of the above happens. Some three years after you first optioned your manga out to the committee to make the anime, it is finally released.

Given that manga has become more global with top creators emerging from Europe, the Americas, and Saturday AM's efforts in Africa, do you expect we will see more anime from various countries as well, either in content inspiration or in the actual animation itself?

Yes, I do. Crunchyroll is putting a lot of effort into expanding into India and Indonesia recently and this is just a small part of their Asia expansion plan. I don't believe that young audiences in these countries hold the same precious view of what anime is or can be. I am confident they will want to see anime retellings of some stories that are important to them. What about an Indian sports anime about cricket? Or an Indonesian romantasy take on Malin Kundang?

Meanwhile! Over in the Middle East and Africa we have Crunchyroll competing with the Saudi state-owned streaming platforms Shaheed

and MBC Anime. Both are building up huge audiences in countries like Morocco, Egypt, Turkey, and most of all, Saudi Arabia and the United Arab Emirates.

Manga is perhaps one of the first mash-up art forms. When I read manga, I see American serialized comics, British gag strips like Punch!, and the much more traditional Japanese narrative scrolls or "emaki-ono." The more you look into the origins of manga and anime, the more you learn that they are not entirely a singular Japanese invention, but more perhaps, a local innovation, like Champagne, a specific, regional sparkling wine whose ingredients can only be found in one specific geographic location. This is what grants manga and anime it's specificity. Its "Japaneseness." Regardless! It thrills me that a very specific cultural outlook from Japan can resonate so deeply with young readers around the world.

I like to think that the inventors and innovators of other contemporary art-forms like hip-hop, break-dancing, B-Boy culture, and rap take similar joy from the meaning their creation holds so deeply with so many people across the entire planet. Do early pioneers like Public Enemy get bent out of shape when they hear Afro-Beat or Croatian rap music? I like to think not. Perhaps these meanderings are reserved for the untalented and the opinionated. I have only ever met two Japanese people who have told me that anime cannot be anime unless it is "100 percent Japanese," and they both work for the same company, and they both had a vested interest in keeping anime production in the hands of a small group of producers. It is funny that nearly everyone who has a strong opinion on what is and isn't manga or anime, don't make it and aren't Japanese.

If someone wants to pursue a career as an animator, are there any steps you can recommend?

- Draw until you can't draw anymore and then draw some more.
- Tracing is a totally legitimate way to learn how to draw and hold a line. When you perfect your lines, start working free-hand.
- Illustrating is writing and writing is illustrating.
- Know when to quit and hand over your work to the publisher. Attaining perfection is a fool's errand.
- If you truly want a career as an animator, you have to want to draw all day, every day. You have to love it. You have to get lost in your work. If you study it formally, you want to over-deliver. Always go

the extra mile. Understand that your formal education of high school and college will only account for a quarter of your training journey. You will learn more and gain skills faster on the job.

- Watch as many behind the scenes and making of documentaries on animators and animated films as you can find. Borrow, rent, or buy “Art of” books for some of your favorite anime and manga creators. Build a diverse list of artists who inspire you. They do not all have to be dedicated anime and manga creators.
- Keep the faith. Build your tribe. Consider working in a team to produce your own projects and self-distribute them. Join clubs and subscribe to mailing lists. Be part of the community. Go to talks and events. Look into mentor programs, bursaries, and scholarships.
- Good luck on your journey. Always be kind to yourself because no one else will be. Do take two days off a week. And don’t sweat it if you don’t end up where you thought you were destined to go. It’s the journey that matters. Always find joy in your work, no matter what you are doing.

Apple Black had an anime short test promo. Despite only being a 15-second spot, it took nearly 5 months to finish.

TOYS, GAMES, AND APPAREL WITH YOUR CHARACTERS

Anita Castellar

CEO, Fangirl Consulting & Brand Management, LLC

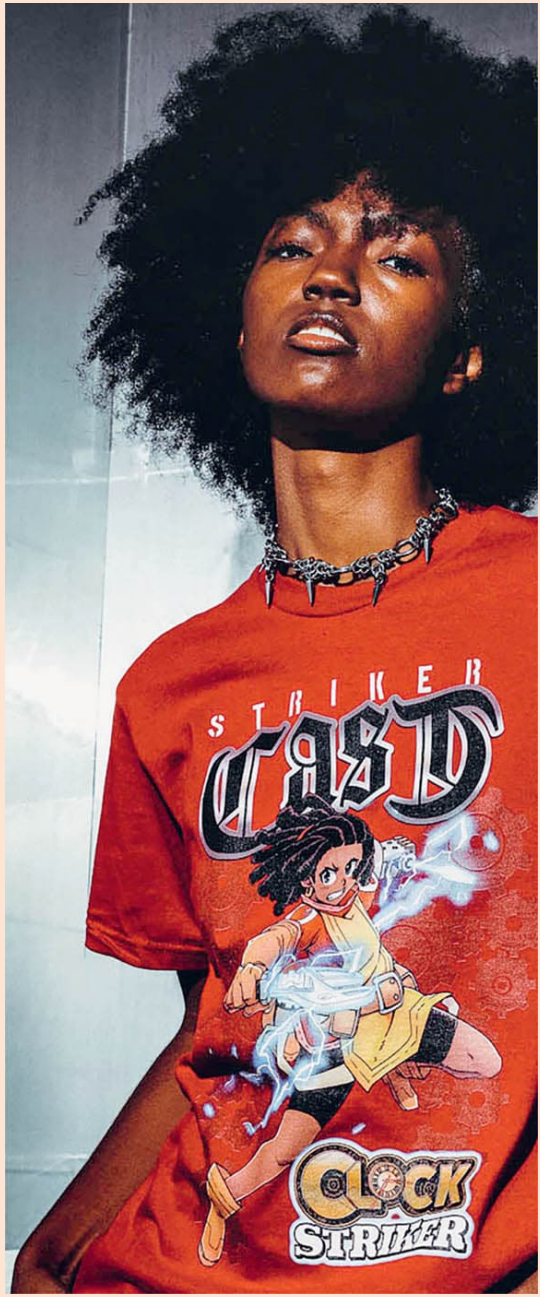
Anita is a licensing professional with over twenty years in the toy and licensing industries developing top brands such as Star Wars brand at Disney, Lucasfilm, and Hasbro. Today, Anita is an independent consultant working with both manufacturers and brands like Saturday AM.

Can independent artists have licensing deals?

The strongest foundation on which to launch a brand for licensing includes compelling characters and stories that make emotional connections. The most financially successful brands tell great stories that people can relate to regardless of where they live and what language they speak. To successfully license physical products at retail requires a moderately high brand awareness or affinity for the property, a built-in fan base, and a pent-up demand for goods related to the content.

What deal terms are basic necessities for a strong agreement with a licensee?

Strong licensing agreements should build long-term value for both the creator and the licensee. Up-front fees such as advances and minimum guarantees are important, but creators should not lose sight of building longevity for the brand through licensing, and, so, royalties and marketing commitments are important as well. Licensees will be interested in clearly defined product rights they can develop, territories in which they can sell those products, as well as the retail outlets where products can be sold. However, for creators, the most important term to include in any licensing agreement is ownership and control over the property or characters they created.



A model photo for our apparel line with Bioworld

Saturday AM's Frederick L. Jones and Anita Castellar of FanGirl Consulting and Brand Management meeting at the North American International Toy Fair in New York!

THE BIGGEST CHALLENGE? SALES!

Saturday AM has been fortunate to have our diverse manga heroes represented in a variety of licensed products. From apparel to manga to trading cards games to toys, Saturday AM has proven that new, original ideas can become popular with the mainstream fan.

While it's not easy to get your books in stores or get licensed merch based on your series, one thing is certain: Building a fanbase and working hard to tell a compelling story will assist in making that dream possible.

Check out trade shows, comic cons, and any artist meetups to make contacts who may want to work with your intellectual property (IP).

Saturday AM's manga and collectibles sitting on a bookshelf alongside classic Japanese manga

LEARN ABOUT THE PROS & CONS OF LICENSING YOUR IP FROM FREDERICK AND ANITA.

SALES

Many young mangaka believe that it's easy to succeed if they just get their work out to fans.

The sad reality is that it's not so simple.

According to Grand View Research's data analysis on manga trends, the US manga market size was estimated at USD 887.3 million in 2023 and is expected to grow at a compound annual growth rate (CAGR) of 22.7 percent from 2024 to 2030.

With over fifteen manga print publishers, including Saturday AM, Viz Media, Kodansha, Yen Press, Denpa, Seven Seas, Inklore, Square Enix, and Udon, hundreds of manga titles are released and distributed to stores in the US each year.

Likewise, via the widely used point-of-sale tracking tool Bookscan, of the top ten bestselling authors of graphic novels in the US, seven are Japanese, with only Tatsuki Fujimoto (Chainsaw Man) and Gege Akutami (Jujutsu Kaisen) selling over 1 million copies in 2023.

Most manga volumes are sold on Amazon and via chain stores like Barnes and Noble, Waterstones, Indigo/Chapters, and WalMart.

Thus, discovery is very hard, and even then selling enough to make a living from your work is not guaranteed. The challenge for any artist is in consistently getting the word out and pushing their work to prospective fans every chance they can get.

Shelf talkers are an effective way to explain your book's story for in-store customers.

BEST BETS FOR DRIVING SALES

Artist allies at conventions:
Conventions are still the best way to meet fans who love physical books and the craft of making a comic or manga. Yes, you will need to get a table or booth and the cost of getting to the show and hassle of carrying your books and merch can be exhausting, but meeting fans and making friends and connections is truly one of the coolest parts of being a mangaka.

Trade shows:
The best way to meet comics professionals (i.e., editors, publishers, sales executives, distributors, and fellow creators) is to attend trade shows. These are not consumer events like Comic Con, but they are dedicated gatherings to discuss the business. Librarians, retailers, licensing, and TV/film producers have trade shows that can be very rewarding for networking.

Buying ads:
Media buying is as old as the newspaper and it's effective. Facebook, Instagram, YouTube, and other social media platforms make reaching your potential target audience easier than ever. While the formula of daily spend, demographic, region, and interests may not be as simple as it seems, and you may need to do some trial and error, online ad buying is the best way to ensure people at least are exposed to your manga.

Sound daunting?

Think again—as any professional will tell you, it has never been easier to make manga or comics than it is right now!

EMERGING OPPORTUNITIES

Sandy Resnick has been in comics for more than three decades, including senior positions at DC and WEBTOON. He developed DC's licensed publishing business, participated in the creation of DC Comics Online, and oversaw international publishing for more than 15 years. At WEBTOON, he served as Head of Rights, helping build their licensing and merchandising business, and currently handles acquisitions, bringing new comics onto the platform from creators, licensors, and other content providers.

Sandy's been in comics for decades. Always look to connect with seasoned professionals!

Is this the best time for new creators in comics, and if so, why?

Technology, including the internet and social media, has democratized the creation of comics to the point where there are no barriers to entry. None. Anyone who wants to write or draw comics can do it and

distribute them to readers worldwide, all from their desk at home. Digital comic platforms like WEBTOON attract tens of millions of US readers—hundreds of millions worldwide—by making it easy for creators to share their stories. The emergence of vertical-scrolling comics enables readers to enjoy them on their phones, wherever they are, anytime they like. Comics have never been more accessible than they are right now.

The challenge in this burgeoning "creator economy" is discoverability: How do you stand out among the endless flood of wonderful (and not-so-wonderful) comics? How do you entice people to try your comic instead of that other one? Social media is an important tool for this, although it relies on a different skill set. When someone checks out your comic, it needs to deliver the experience they want. If it doesn't, the ready availability of all those other comics means they can move on with the click of a thumb on their phone screen.

I think that's why creator-driven comics have become so important. The one unique thing a creator can offer to compete in this landscape is their distinctive vision and voice. Make the comics you want to see in the world. Odds are there are others who also want to see those comics, even if they don't know it until they find them. Readers are drawn to authenticity. Give it to them.

Why is the Asian influence so dominant within comics right now and will this be the lasting trend?

Culture never stops evolving, with trends that coalesce into tipping points and define generational lines. Just as rock music was succeeded by hip-hop, traditional US comics have been eclipsed by manga. That's driven by many factors, including the prevalence of streaming anime and the natural swing of the cultural pendulum, as teenagers look for something new and different they can own as theirs. It isn't a coincidence that manga's growth has been paralleled by the growth of Western-style graphic novels for young readers. Generations define themselves, in part, by the art and entertainment they embrace. However, despite manga's commercial dominance, there's still an extraordinary array of Western comics, especially in the thriving creator-owned and indie creator segments. Eventually, other forms will move into the mainstream, as new generations dictate what's cool. Manga will still be around. One Piece and Naruto and their kin will still be popular, especially among then-older readers—just like Batman and the X-Men before them.

DIGITAL SALES

While every creator dreams of having their printed manga sold in a physical store, do not disregard digital sales. In Japan, 70 percent of all manga sales are digital, and the trend is global.

WANT TO GET PRESS FOR YOUR MANGA?

Gemma Cox was editor-in-chief of UK's largest anime and manga periodical, *NEO*, for over twenty years! Although publication ended in 2024, *NEO* was one of the prominent voices advocating for anime and East Asian culture in the UK for twenty years. Gemma has covered many indie manga artists over the years, and here she shares her thoughts on manga's rise.

What was the idea behind starting the magazine back in the early aughts, and did you see it going as long as it did?

The magazine was launched in 2004 by designer Claire Trent, editorial director Darren Herridge, and Stu Taylor, the editor—I joined on issue two! The idea was to promote Asian pop culture and bring an educated and entertaining voice to a readership desperate to learn more. In those days, we still had to buy individual anime episodes on VHS tapes, and the idea that one day, you'd be able to access a wealth of titles in a digital library was a distant dream. Print media has been a risky prospect for a while, and I always knew there would be an endpoint for *NEO*, but I don't think anyone could have predicted it would have lasted twenty years! I'm so proud of what our team accomplished! Thanks to the hard work of our writers and designer, Claire, *NEO* managed to outlast every other single anime magazine in the UK combined. That's certainly something worth celebrating!

Built for success! Gemma presided over NEO *for twenty years!*

20 YEARS OF ANIME, ASIAN FILM & POP CULTURE!
NEO
Issue 245
THE COLOURS WITHIN / MACROSS PLUS / LONELY CASTLE IN THE MIRROR
CHINESE CLAYPOT COOKING / DAN DA DAN / LIVE ACTION ONE PIECE 2
LORD OF THE RINGS: WAR OF THE ROHIRRIM / BLAZING STRIKE / COSPLAY
ANIME PREVIEW
THE DEMON GIRL NEXT DOOR, LORD OF THE RINGS, AND MORE!
©ZUMO ITO,HOUBUNSHA/Machikadomazoku2 Production Committee
UZUMAKI'S CURSE
WHAT WENT WRONG WITH OCTOBER'S BIG NAME ANIME?
CINEMA HISTORY
DAVID WEST ON 20 YEARS OF ASIAN CINEMA IN THE UK
NEW SHOWS
TOP STREAMING ANIME FOR YOU TO CHECK OUT NOW!
UNCOOKED MEDIA
9 771744 959077 45
£5.99

Nearly every issue of NEO *featured reviews, interviews, previews, and manga pages.*

With K-pop concerts, the 2019 Manga exhibit in the British Museum, and more anime cons like AnimeCon in Birmingham, the growth of Asian pop culture in Britain and Ireland has been explosive. What trends have you seen over the years, and what stands out as to why it's grown so much recently? Have you

always covered J-pop and K-pop, for example, or was that more recent?

We've always taken a comprehensive approach to covering Asian pop culture, so we've covered music, games, movies, anime, and manga, but the explosion of J-pop and then K-pop has been incredible. I think it's fair to say that anime and manga is nowhere near as niche as it was when *NEO* first began—we were about nine years out from the original *Ghost in the Shell* movie in 1995, and during our publishing run, we got to see live-action versions of that movie, as well as *Alita: Battle Angel* and even an animated version of *Lord of the Rings* is coming later this year. Seeing Ed Sheeran cavort with Pokémon in the "Celestial" music video was also fairly extraordinary. The Millennials and Gen-X kids got to experience the early days of anime and manga in that magical time when you had to really work hard to discover each title, so it's no wonder they've gone on to incorporate that love into the popular culture here in the West and pave the way for younger generations to enjoy it too. With the rise of social media and streaming, fans have been more connected than ever, and it's been wonderful to see how this has led to more fans finding out about titles that would go on to spark a lifetime love of anime and manga.

***NEO* regularly featured "manga" from creators not from Japan or Asian countries, and they had done so for quite a while. Why did you start to do this, and what reception has this type of manga received from your readers?**

Right from the beginning, I was steadfast that as a Western anime and manga mag, part of our job was not only to bring Asian pop culture to an Englishspeaking audience but also to support and encourage readers' dreams of creating their own manga, too. One of the first things that entrances so many fans is the distinctive art style of so much popular manga, and I'd imagine many of us have at least tried to doodle an eye or two while we were reading or watching our favorite shows. I think that Western fans can bring a unique perspective and diversity to the world of manga, and we are always happy to support creators with tutorials, showcases, and even art and manga competitions. Many artists have written to me over the years about how *NEO* inspired them to tell their stories and turn them into careers. I'm eternally grateful to have been in a position to help encourage people with the magazine. Together, I believe we've built a space where manga's storytelling power and ability to connect people are celebrated and made accessible to even more people.

With Saturday AM, WEBTOON, Viz Originals, and some Tapas titles now making it to book formats, manga, in particular, is gaining more prominence in Europe, the Americas, and Africa. What was *NEO*'s perception of manga fandom in Europe, considering that France was so much bigger than most countries except Japan?

As an English-language publication, most of our focus on overseas fandom went to the United States. I think very few fans in the UK are aware even now of France's long history with bande dessinée and even fewer can access them unless they have translations in English. I remember attending Comic Con Paris and being astounded at how much more money pumps into fandom and how enormous the halls were at the Parc des Expositions. Through the years, we'd seen the MCM Comic Con grow and expand, but the French con scene seemed incredible in comparison.

45+
PAGES OF ANIME AND MANGA!
BRAND NEW STREAMING ANIME REVIEWED INSIDE
NEO
ANIME • MUSIC • A
ULTURE • MANGA
FREE POSTERS! / TASTY JAPANESE NOODLE RECIPES / KEMONO JIHEN TRANSLATION CONTROVERSY / TOYKO FASHION DIARY / COSPLAY WIN! £50 TITAN MANGA BUNDLE / TOTORO STAGE PLAY / ONE PIECE
SATURDAY AM
IS THIS THE FUTURE OF MANGA?
TROPICAL JAPAN
COME WITH US TO THE SANDY BEACHES OF OKINAWA!
MWAM
MAN WITH A MISSION ON THEIR NEW ALBUM
SUMMER GHOST
WE SPEAK WITH DEBUT ANIME DIRECTOR LOUNDRAW
UNCOOKED MEDIA
£4.99

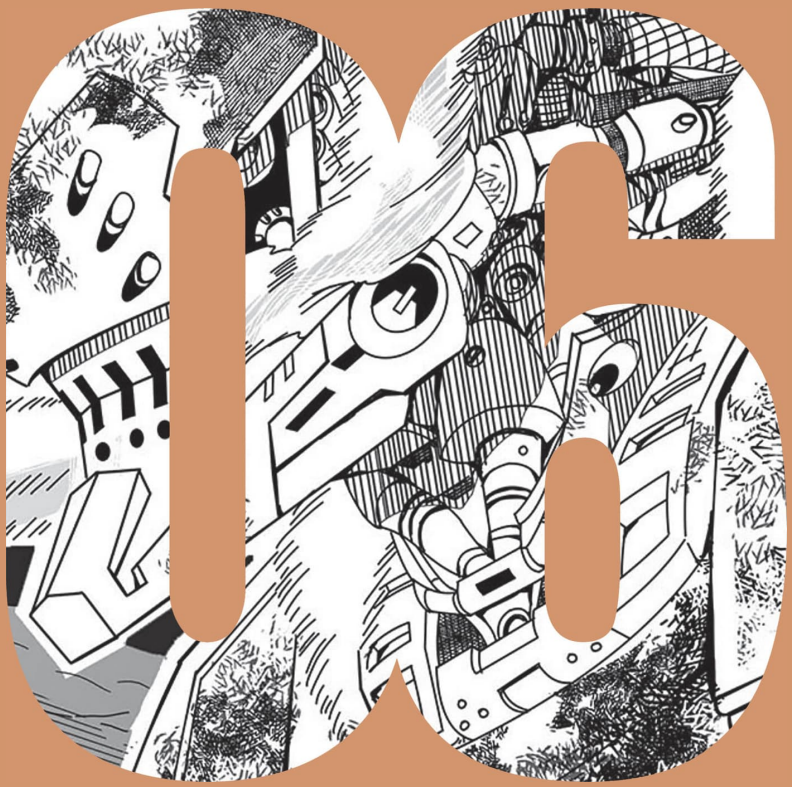
Saturday AM was honored to be featured on the cover of an issue of NEO.

Manga fandom and anime news used to be scant and now exist in podcasts, YouTube videos, and online sites. What are the pros and cons of this short-form or instant manga coverage for fandom today?

There are so many voices now, and that's fantastic for sharing a range of opinions and encouraging people from diverse backgrounds to engage with the medium. You don't have to wait for a magazine to be published to read reviews, and you can be sure your favorite critic or influencers will provide you with content regularly. The pros of a publication like *NEO* are that you can consume much longer-form content, which can focus on some of the nuances and provides a richer, in-depth experience. I hope one day, the UK gets another pop culture magazine that can continue our mission of expert, long-form, and well-researched coverage, but until then, there are so many really fantastic, clever, funny, and educated content creators who can provide their unique takes and help to celebrate and promote Asian pop culture, anime, and manga to fans. A professionally curated collection of criticism and commentary will always offer value to fans, and *NEO*'s unique editorial voice was a vital part of that landscape.

In the final chapter, we let you test out everything you've learned on some existing Saturday AM manga!

CHAPTER
TEST YOUR SKILLS



NOW IT'S YOUR TURN!

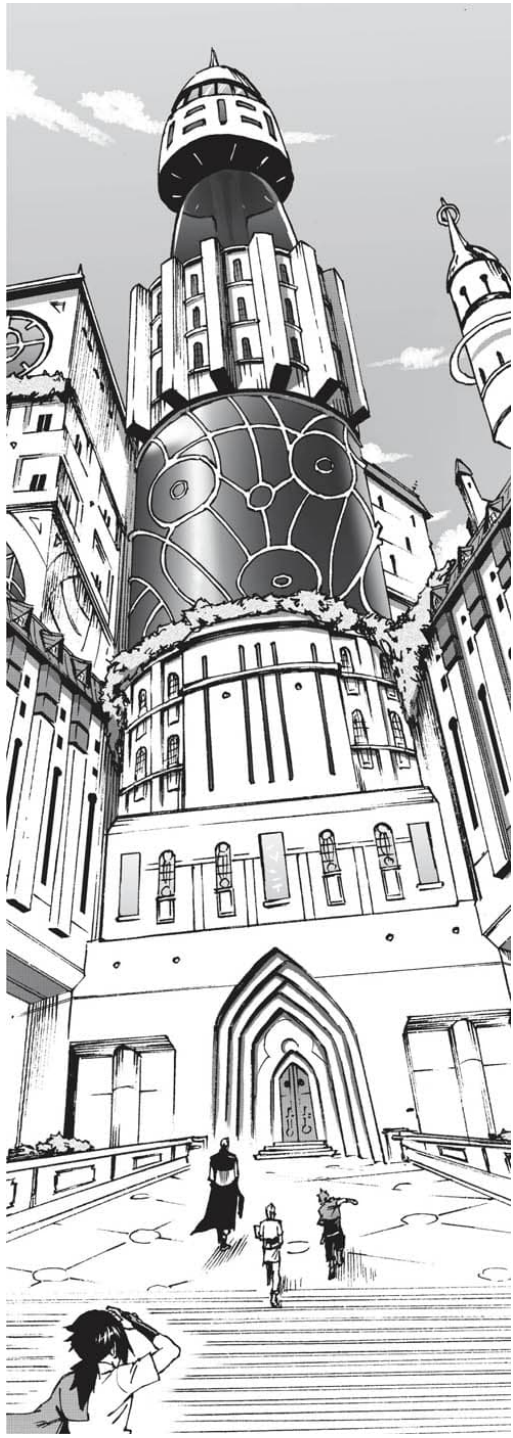
Okay, you've read our strategies and insights on crafting your unique manga! You also now understand the actual business of selling your comics to both consumers and to businesses. Now, we want to give you a chance to test your skills!

Apple Black and Clock Striker are our two most popular series with our two most popular artists. Over the next few pages, we offer exclusive examples for you to showcase your talents!

Watch our exclusive video on making manga from Frederick L. Jones, Issaka Galadima, and Whyt Manga, and use our tips on completing these test pages for your portfolio.

Share your creations on social media with the hashtag #sharemakingmanga—we may use these for future Saturday AM events, including #summerofmanga submissions as well as March Art Madness.

Let's go!



Sano and his friends enter the school for magic in Apple Black.

SCAN TO ACCESS TEMPLATES TO TRY OUT YOUR MANGA-MAKING SKILLS!

APPLE BLACK PAGES FOR INKING

Odune Oguguo (a.k.a. Whyt Manga) has provided a few pages that you can practice on using concepts learned from this book.

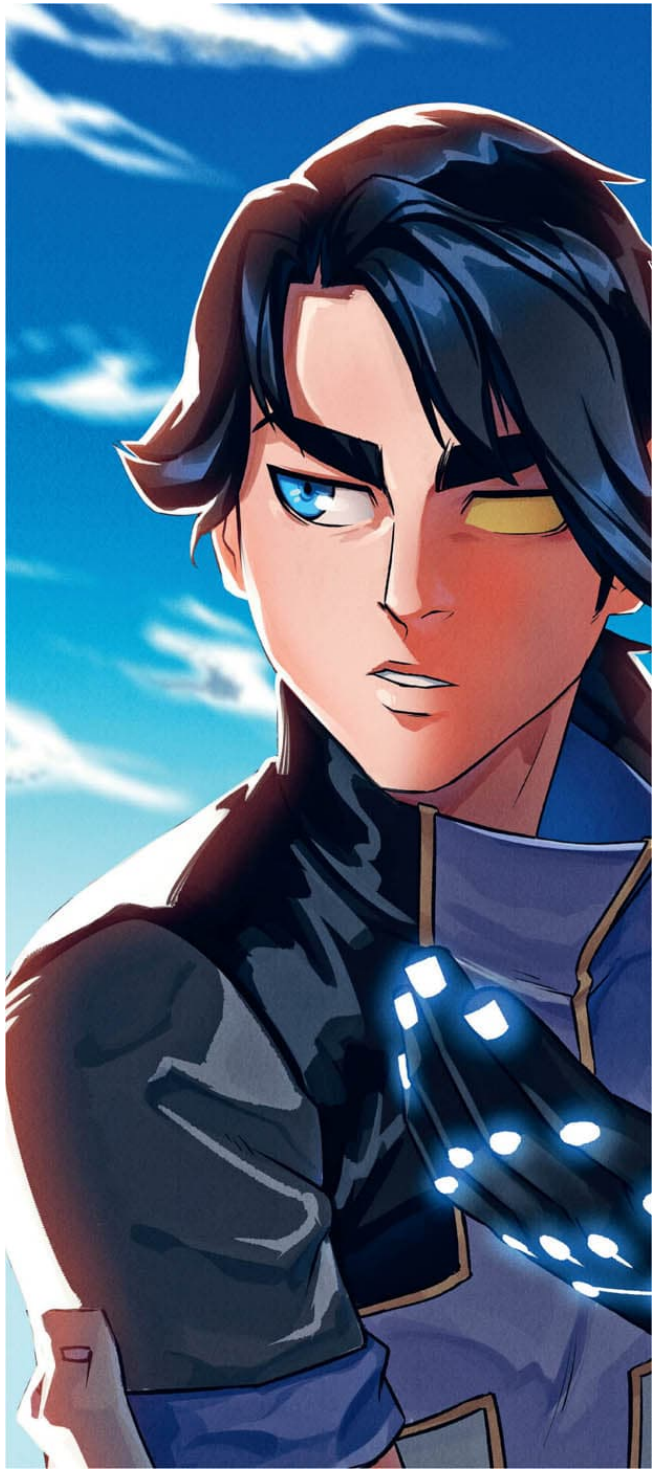
On the first page (see opposite), you can finish the page from the breakdowns Whyt has provided. This is hard and requires you to bring your own ideas to the table. Whyt's guidance is to complete the page to the best of your ability.

In the second example, you can letter a page from Apple Black. Choose the best fonts and consider an appropriate size to communicate the emotions of the characters.

Finally, an original manga story involving Sano and Opal having a friendly match. Just how friendly it is and how it ends is going to be up to you. Read the pages and then come up with two more pages to write, draw, ink, and letter to show the world how *you* would make

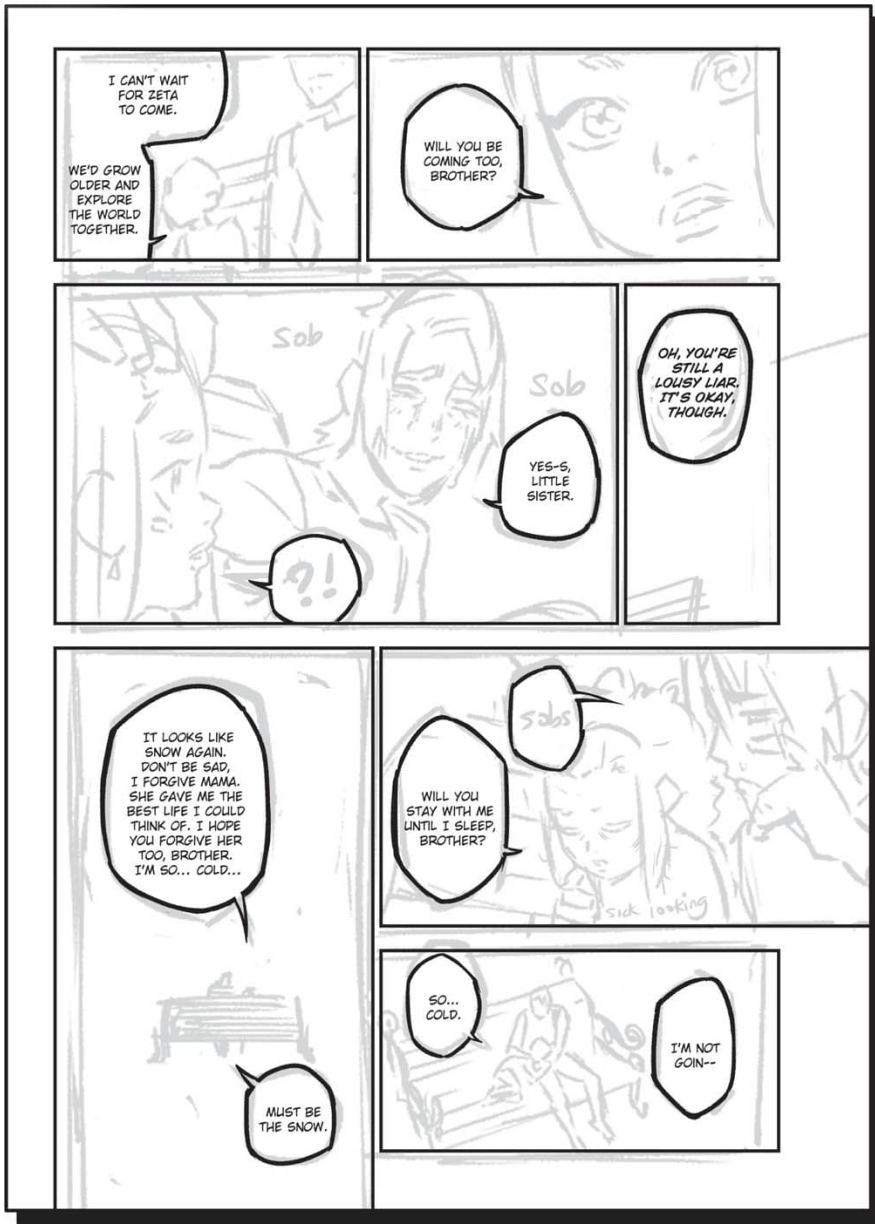
manga!

All these exercises are perfect for learning how to complete a page and are the sort of tests Whyt uses for his own assistants.



FOR TIPS AND TRICKS ON COMPLETING THIS TEST SECTION, USE THE QR CODE TO GET EXCLUSIVE COMMENTS ON INKING FROM WHYT MANGA HIMSELF!

Finish the Page


I CAN'T WAIT FOR ZETA TO COME.
WE'D GROW OLDER AND EXPLORE THE WORLD TOGETHER.
WILL YOU BE COMING TOO, BROTHER?
Sob
Sob
YES-S, LITTLE SISTER.
?!
OH, YOU'RE STILL A LOUSY LIAR. IT'S OKAY, THOUGH.
IT LOOKS LIKE SNOW AGAIN. DON'T BE SAD, I FORGIVE MAMA. SHE GAVE ME THE BEST LIFE I COULD THINK OF. I HOPE YOU FORGIVE HER TOO, BROTHER. I'M SO... COLD...
MUST BE THE SNOW.
Sobs
WILL YOU STAY WITH ME UNTIL I SLEEP, BROTHER?
Sick looking
SO... COLD.
I'M NOT GOIN--

LETTERING TEST! CAN YOU LETTER LIKE A MANGA PRO?

Panel 1

Especially you, Sano.

Panel 2

Right back at ya.

Panel 3

Excuse me?

As much as Ruby wants to face me, he'll come for you too.

After all, you're still much scarier, and I think he has realized that.

Panel 4

My Merlin, you think his biggest rival was by his side the whole time, huh?

Not gonna lie, I'd read that story.

Heh.

Lettering Tips

Remember, the best reading experience is one where the lettering doesn't distract from the story but enhances the art. So consider these helpful tips:

- Center alignment is the most appropriate for comic lettering.
- Do not make your speech bubble too thin.
- Try not to cram too many words into the speech bubble—create a second bubble if you need to.
- Use only one font for regular dialogue.

Check out these poorly lettered examples:

Especially you, Sano
Right back at ya.
Excuse me?
As much as Ruby wants to face me. He'll come for you too.
After all you're still much scarier and I think he has realized that.
My Merlin, you think his biggest rival was by his side the whole time, hmh?
Not gonna lie, I'd read that story.
Heh.

Especially you, Sano
Right back at ya.
Excuse me?
As much as Ruby wants to face me. He'll come for you too.
After all you're still much scarier and I think he has realized that.
My Merlin, you think his biggest rival was by his side the whole time, huh?
Not gonna lie, I'd read that story.
Heh.

CREATE YOUR OWN ENDING FOR THIS APPLE BLACK SHORT STORY!

URGH!
HUH?!
COUGH! COUGH!
SH
SH
SH
SH
THAT HURT A BIT TOO MUCH. I MIGHT JUST FORGET THAT YOU'RE NOT YOU RIGHT NOW.
WANT ME TO RETURN THE FAVOR?
"THE FAVOR"? YOUR SENSE OF HUMOR IS WELCOME. I SEE WHY WE LIKE YOU.
I'LL SAY IT ONCE MORE...
SH
SH
SH
SNAP OUT OF IT, SANO!
YOU'RE MISTAKEN.
THIS IS THE MOST ABSOLUTE VERSION OF ME YOU'VE EVER ENCOUNTERED. I AM SANO. YET, NOT. AND THEN MORE. I AM EVERYTHING, EVERYWHERE, EVERY TIME, ALL AT ONCE.
INFINITE OMNISCIENCE INCARNATE, BASKING IN THE FLORESCENT PLASMA OF A BLACK HOLE THAT TRANSCENDS UNIVERSES.
YOUR DELUSION IS THE CAUSE OF YOUR DEMISE.
EVEN WITH YOUR WAND, YOU WERE BLINDED BY ONE OF HUMANITY'S GREATEST WEAKNESSES.
YOU SHOULD'VE STOPPED LOOKING AT ME WHEN I ASKED.
FAREWELL, OPAL.

CLOCK STRIKER PAGES FOR CREATING

This sample section is unique.

Saturday AM founder and Clock Striker creator Frederick L. Jones and artist Issaka Galadima have provided a new canon short story and leave it up to you to finish it.

Here's the script plot for the first four pages plus the remaining three pages, which you will complete on your own.

Good luck!

Page 1: (1) Cast and this blonde-haired demon bandit (DB) kid are in a Mexican standoff. Cast is telling the kid, "We're kids—we don't need to fight!" The DB kid states, "I'm a Demon Bandit and you're that Striker of our mortal enemy, the Smith known as Clock. Of course, we have to fight!" (2) Cast looks winded (indicating they've already fought). "But I don't have an issue with you. Besides, if you keep this up, you're going to damage your cybernetic hand. I can hear the motor is . . . (3) The DB kid shouts "Shut up! I heard about you—you're not a cyborg—you're just a cripple with a robot hand. You can't hurt me." (4) Cast slips a pod into her mobile lab hand. "I was raised to never judge a book by its cover."

Page 2: (1) Speed lines with close-up of Cast yelling, fist ready to punch something. (2) Speed line of DB kid with a cyborg gun hand. (3) Cast activates her lab hand and it propels her up as the demon bandit shoots! (4) We see the DB kid in the foreground looking surprised while Cast is above her pointing her hand at the DB kid.

Page 3: (1) We see the gummy stuff hit the DB kid's back. (2) Big panel — Cast crashes into the DB kid.

Page 4: (1) The DB kid turns around to shoot Cast. (2) Cast catches the gun hand with her lab hand. (3) We see the DB kid close in, scared. (4) Cast shatters the gun hand. (5) We see the kid in tears with a real hand and Cast standing above them. "See, I knew you weren't a cyborg."

NOW FINISH THE STORY USING THESE PLOT POINTS TO GUIDE YOUR ART!

Page 5: (1) Flashback sequence—Establishing shot is a bank at night, lights out in a steampunk-looking small town downtown. (2) An explosion rocks the panel. (3) We see two bandits run out with bags of cash. One has frizzy blonde hair and another is shorter, balding with a scar on his forehead. Both wear glasses. Neither looks intimidating at

all. (4) Both are gasping for air, as they are happy to have made it out alive.

Page 6: (1) The taller man with frizzy hair is walking toward the camera laughing at their luck. (2) Same panel, but we get a confused expression from him as he hears the other bandit tell him that this is the end of the road. (3) The shorter bandit has a cybernetic arm with a gun cocked and pointing at him and explains that the demon bandits advised that the frizzy-haired one must turn over his share of the money and become a cyborg or die. (4) A close-up of the short bandit shows he is in tears, but is angry, telling the frizzy-haired bandit that he doesn't want to kill him and that they've been friends. He pleads with him to just give in and become a cyborg. (5) The frizzy-haired bandit is seen close up with just his mouth, looking pained and grumbling with anger. (6) We then see a close-up shot of the frizzy-haired bandit looking back at the reader with a surprising smile, twinkle in his eye, and his gun nozzle resting on his forehead. (7) Black panel with a BAM! sfx

Page 7: (1) Present day. We see the DB kid in angry tears. She says her father managed to kill his friend and used the money to save her life from an illness but was then hunted down and killed in front of her by the other bandits. (2) Cast looks pained as she feels some sympathy for the girl. (3) Cast reaches down to help the girl up but she slaps Cast's hand away. (4) The local sheriff grabs the girl, who is kicking and screaming that she'll get Cast one day and then the DB will let her join so she can then find the leader who murdered her father—and kill him too! (5) Cast looks determined as she tells the girl she'll be waiting and in the meantime, she will take down the bandits with Ms. Clock's help.

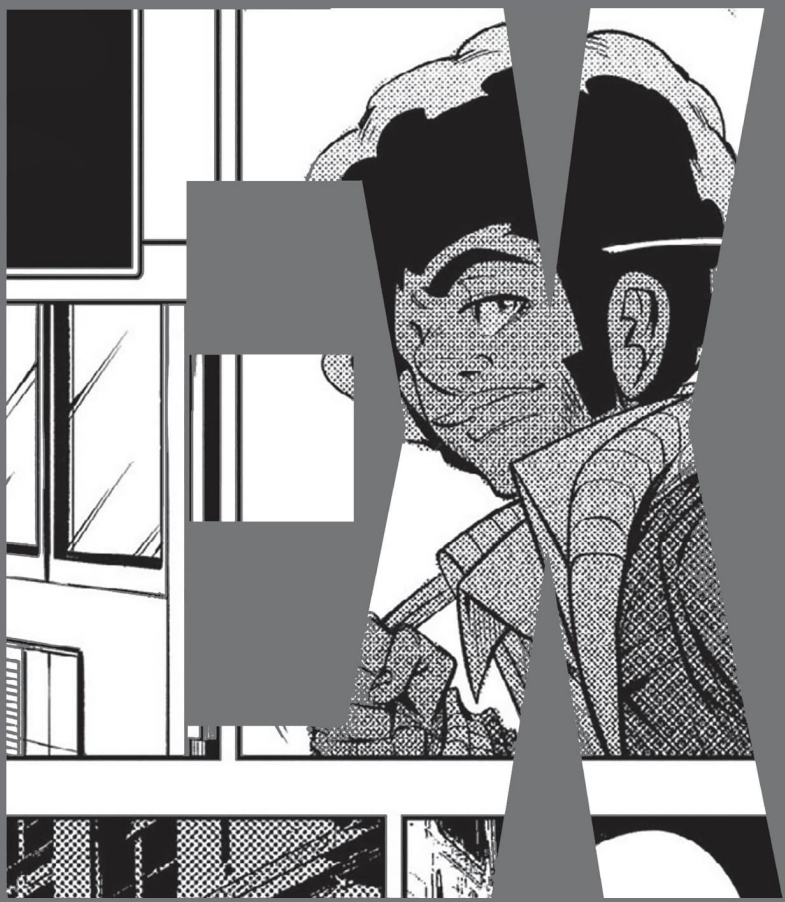
WE'RE KIDS — WE DON'T NEED TO FIGHT!
I'M A DEMON BANDIT AND YOU'RE THAT STRIKER OF OUR MORTAL ENEMY, THE SMITH KNOWN AS CLOCK.
OF COURSE, WE HAVE TO FIGHT!
BUT I DON'T HAVE AN ISSUE WITH YOU.
BESIDES, IF YOU KEEP THIS UP, YOU'RE GOING TO DAMAGE YOUR CYBERNETIC HAND.
I CAN HEAR THE MOTOR IS...
SHUT UP! I HEARD ABOUT YOU — YOU'RE NOT A CYBORG — YOU'RE JUST A CRIPPLE WITH A ROBOT HAND.
YOU CAN'T HURT ME.
I WAS RAISED TO NEVER JUDGE A BOOK BY ITS COVER!

SHK!
DASH
DO
DO
DA
NITROGEN JET JUMP!

CLICK!
CLICK!
CLICK!
PRESSURED AIR--
CRAP! I AM OUT OF AMMO!
CLICK!
CLICK!
SHE'S BEEN COUNTING MY BULLETS ALL THIS TIME?!
--SHOOT!
KYAHH!
GRAB!
UGH!! I AM NOT DONE YET!!
SHK!!

CATCH
TMP
KRK
KRK
KRK
CRUSH!!
SEE? I KNEW YOU WEREN'T A CYBORG.
...

EXTRAS



THANKS FOR JOINING US!

Though none of the next steps are easy, you now have a guide to assist your creativity.

We hope this collection of professional insights, stunning art, and in-depth examples by some of the best artists within Saturday AM inspires you to create your manga!

And if we're lucky, we'll see your work in one of our upcoming contests from March Art Madness to #summerofmanga!

Again, we can't wait!

Good luck!

A mash-up of various Saturday AM characters

GLOSSARY

A

Action Lines (Speed Lines):
Dynamic lines used to indicate motion or energy, often appearing in backgrounds.

Angle:
The perspective from which a scene or character is depicted, such as bird's eye view, low angle, or close-up.

B

Background:
The scenery or environment that frames the characters and action in a manga panel.

Balloon (Speech Bubble):
A container for dialogue or thought text in manga panels.

C

Character Design:
The process of creating unique and recognizable visual traits for characters.

Chibi:
A style of drawing characters in exaggerated, small, and cute proportions.

Composition:
The arrangement of elements within a panel to guide the reader's eye.

D

Dialogue:
Written communication between characters, usually placed inside speech balloons.

E

Expressions:

Facial features and body language used to convey a character's emotions.

F

Flow:
The way a reader's eye moves across the page, typically guided by panel arrangement and artwork.

Frames (Panels):
Individual sections within a manga page that contain art and story content.

G

Genre:
The thematic category of a manga, such as shonen, shojo, seinen, or josei.

I

Inking:
The process of refining pencil sketches with ink to create clean, final lines.

L

Lettering:
The process of adding text to a manga, including dialogue, sound effects, and captions.

M

Mangaka:
A manga creator or artist.

P

Pacing:
The speed and rhythm at which the story unfolds, influenced by panel layout and content.

Panel:
An individual frame containing a specific moment in the story.

S

Shojo:
Manga targeted primarily at young female audiences, often romance-focused.

Shonen:
Manga targeted primarily at young male audiences, often action-packed.

Storyboard:
A rough outline of the manga's narrative and panel arrangement.

T

Thumbnail:
A small, quick sketch used to plan page layouts.

ACKNOWLEDGMENTS

*THANK YOU FOR READING **MAKING MANGA**!*

IT WAS ONE OF THE MORE DIFFICULT THINGS WE'VE DONE IN THE PAST FEW YEARS SINCE WE LAUNCHED OUR MANGA BOOK LINE WITH QUARTO. WITH SO MANY HOW-TO BOOKS, FINDING A UNIQUE DIRECTION IS DIFFICULT, AND IT'S EASY TO SECOND-GUESS YOUR DECISIONS. AS ALWAYS, OUR GOALS ARE TO CELEBRATE MANGA WHILE NORMALIZING DIVERSITY AND REPRESENTATION. WITH SO MANY INDIVIDUALS ON YOUTUBE AND SOCIAL MEDIA, IT'S OFTEN DIFFICULT TO DISCERN INFORMATION THAT IS RELEVANT AND ACCURATE, AND THUS, WE WERE COMMITTED TO ENSURING WE ANSWERED AS MANY QUESTIONS AS WE GET FROM FANS ACROSS SOCIAL MEDIA AND OUR CONVENTION APPEARANCES.

FURTHERMORE, INDUSTRY FRIENDS CAME OUT AT MY REQUEST AND GAVE TIME TO ENSURE THIS BOOK HAD REAL INSIGHT! I AM FOREVER INDEBTED TO GOOD FRIENDS RENEE, SANDY, ALAN, ROD, ANITA, AND MORE.

LASTLY, WE HAVE TO ACKNOWLEDGE OUR FANS! WHETHER IT'S NYCC, AMERICAN LIBRARY ASSOCIATION, OR ANIMATE! RALEIGH, THE PURE JOY THAT YOUNG AND OLD CUSTOMERS EXPERIENCE SEEING OUR LINE OF MANGA IS THE FUEL THAT POWERS OUR TEAM TO HIGHER HEIGHTS. THERE'S NO HOW-TO BOOK THAT CAN ADEQUATELY PREPARE YOU FOR THOUSANDS OF FANS WORLDWIDE WHO APPRECIATE WHAT YOU DO.

WE ARE FOREVER HUMBLED BY THE INDUSTRY, BUT MORE IMPORTANTLY, OUR COMMUNITY OF SATURDAY AM SUPPORTERS. THIS BOOK IS FOR ALL OF YOU WHO DREAM OF CREATING YOUR OWN MANGA IN YOUR IMAGE—AND WE HOPE THIS HELPS YOU IN SOME WAY!

—FREDERICK L. JONES

CREDITS

THE TEAM

FREDERICK L. JONES

Frederick L. Jones is a former videogame executive with stints at Rapp Collins Worldwide and the former Blockbuster. He founded MyFutprint Entertainment, LLC in 2013 as a means to bring more diversity to manga and has created several brands and series for the firm, including Saturday AM, Clock Striker, Massively Multiplayer World of Ghosts, and March Art Madness.

ODUNZE OGUGUO

Odunze Oguguo, known as Whyt Manga, is a co-founder of MyFutprint Entertainment, LLC and creator of the hit series Apple Black and Bacassi, published in Saturday AM and Saturday PM, respectively.

JOSHUA THOMAS

Joshua Thomas is a graphic designer by trade and has worked with Saturday AM for four years. He loves helping to bring diverse stories to life and ensuring kids today see characters that look like them with stories that resonate with their experiences.

AUSTIN HARVEY-YOUNIS

Austin Harvey-Younis has been with Saturday AM since 2016. Throughout his career within the company, he has worked as a story writer and editor, supporting the wide cast of stories and creators the company has to offer.

CONTRIBUTORS

MORGANNE WALKER

Morganne Walker, known online as @soulbeatmanga, lives in Indianapolis and is a Ball State University alumna with a master's in architecture. She currently works full-time as a graduate architect while also creating her popular Saturday AM series, Soul Beat.

OSCAR FONG

Oscar Fong, known online as @fongfumaster, is a New Zealand–based freelance illustrator. He is a co-creator and artist of the popular manga-inspired Saturday AM series Massively Multiplayer World of Ghosts.

MITCH PROCTOR

Mitch Proctor, known as Bon Idle, is a graphic designer and illustrator from Nottingham, England, where they live with their cat. They are also the creator of the Sentai-inspired comic Henshin! for Saturday Brunch.

ISSAKA GALADIMA

Issaka Galadima, known online as @gladiskstudio, is from the Niger Republic and currently lives in France, where he works as a mobile app developer. He is the artist of the hit series Clock Striker for Saturday AM.

JONATHAN MULLINS

Jonathan Mullins, known as JeyOdin, is the creator of Saturday AM's popular series Hammer. The prolific artist from New Orleans has been published by Antarctic Press, Oni Press, and *USA Today*. He lives with his wife and two cute (and often hilarious) dogs.

KRISTINA ANDABAK

Kristina Andabak is a studied cultural scientist and freelance author. Since 2020, she has been working on her first manga series Grimmheim, a dark fantasy story with feminist influences based in a setting inspired by the witch hunts of Germany.

FRED TORNAGER

Fred Tornager, known online as @fred_tornager, is a Danish manga artist and creator of the new Saturday Brunch manga-inspired title Gunhild.

GOEFFREY JEAN-LOUIS

Haitian-American artist Goeffrey Jean-Louis was born in White Plains, New York, and raised in Orlando, Florida. After his short story "Mara the Martian" appeared in the 2017 edition of #summerofmanga, the annual new artist showcase from Saturday AM, Goeffrey was tapped to illustrate and co-plot the seinen supernatural mystery series Yellow Stringer for Saturday AM's sister magazine Saturday PM.

RESOURCES

animazedstore.com

animenewsnetwork.com/answerman

cdjapan.co.jp

coco-cornett.com

grandviewresearch.com/press-release/global-manga-market

jeremywhitley.com

ultimatecomics.com

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